PARTISAN REVIEW

PR

MARCH-APRIL, 1942

JEAN MALAQUAIS
Marianka (a story)

T. S. ELIOT
A Letter to the Editors

FRANK JONES
French Writers Under Hitler

PAUL GOODMAN
The Shape of the Screen and the Darkness of the Theatre

DYLAN THOMAS
Ballad of the Long-Legged Bait

GEORGE ORWELL
London Letter

•

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Marianka

Jean Malaquais

A Note on Malaquais—by Justin O'Brien

THERE ARE SOME of us who would read anything on Gide's recommendation, the New Testament or Simenon, Blake or Giraudoux or Nietzsche, because we know his critical work, some of it fifty years old now, and respect his keen judgment. We know from experience that when Gide champions an unknown writer, no ulterior motive colors his appreciation. It was André Gide, in the summer of 1939, who first spoke to me of *Les Javanais*. I was not disappointed.

To begin with, it has nothing to do with the East Indies. It gets its title from the local name for a city of shacks at the head of a mine-shaft in Provence—the island of Java—probably so called because of its isolation from the rest of the world. Dealing with migratory mine-workers, refugees from all countries, the novel reveals a social consciousness that we are unaccustomed to find in contemporary French literature outside of André Malraux and Jean Giono. The characters and the life depicted obviously derive from experience, and the scenes of violence, related in a brutal style that often recalls Faulkner and Steinbeck, make this a very moving story which is also a social document. In fact, were it only for the idiot girl and the occasional rape scenes, one could be fairly sure that the author had read Faulkner. In *Books Abroad* for 1940, Albert Guerard said of *Les Javanais*: "As a tale of misery, it challenges comparison with *Little Man What Now* and *The Grapes of Wrath*. From the literary point of view, it is better than either. It is as realistic, as human; it has more genuine humor; and it rises without effort to the level of poetry."

Les Javanais was too good to win the Goncourt Prize, possibly too juicily realistic for the academicians who timidly perpetuate the memory of Naturalism by electing Sacha Guitry to sit among them. But it did win the Renaudot Prize, awarded by a group of Parisian critics who have no money, but much publicity, to confer. Its young author, Jean Malaquais, became famous overnight. But this was in December 1939 when Malaquais was already somewhere at the front with the French army.

There even sprouted a legend that, come recently from Poland, he had learned French in three years and then written his novel. Now anyone who has ever taught French, anyone who has ever learned French knows this to be impossible. In three years Malaquais might, *à la rigueur*, have learned to speak French adequately and to handle the special idiom of his "Javanese" with its intermingling of all the dialects of Europe. But as for writing of them as he does, that is not possible in so short a time.

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His language is eminently racy, vigorous, highly personal. Just read the opening description of Maniek Bryla, the loquacious, sniffling youth who wants to go to the station to warm himself against the steam radiators. In two pages a thin outcast rises up before you in his rags. Or take the final paragraph of the book with its Célinesque bitterness:

> Puis, voilà c'est cuit, il n'y a plus rien à raconter. En trois tours de passe-passe une *Ile* a été escamotée, comme une fleur de pissenlit au vent, et pas une cicatrice n'en reste sur l'un quelconque des hémisphères connues pour marquer l'ex-endroit. On peut toujours fendre l'eau, farfouiller les mappemondes, piquer du bec dans les traités d'hydrographie: c'est frit flambé, Atropos la parque y est passée avec son ablateur pour queues de mouton et c'est fini terminé. Comme l'anaplérose, cette plaie qui fait naître de nouvelles chairs, *Java-Côte-d'Azur* a changé de situation géographique. Porteurs de germe, les hommes sont allés coloniser d'autres *Iles*, les pendards sont partis qui dépensaient vingt mille francs par semaine entre Vaugelas et la Double Pesée soit un million par an. Ils sont partis emportant leur million annuel ces caqueux erratiques à la recherche d'une fourrière, ils se sont décanillés cul par-dessus tête dans la vase cosmique, et au pied de la cheminée et sous le clapotis de la fontaine ils ont laissé leur évocation d'excommuniés qui reviennent et se font vampires.

The truth is somewhat less sensational than the legend. Born in Warsaw in 1908, the son of a professor of classical languages in the secondary school system, he came to Paris at the age of eighteen. After studying law at the University of Paris for a time, he turned to writing and had articles accepted by well known periodicals. Soon he had attracted the attention of such writers as André Gide, Franz Hellens, André Malraux and Roger Martin du Gard. Somewhere in the thirties he gave his Polish name Malacki a French ending, which inevitably associated him in everyone's mind with the beautiful embankment in Paris where Houdon's seated Voltaire smiles sardonically on passers-by. In September 1939 he joined the French army and fought against Germany. Taken prisoner, he was released in October 1940.

At present he is in Marseilles where he has been for over a year now, trying desperately to get papers and passage to America. This very morning with his wife Galina Yurkévitch, the young Russian painter, he may well have made his regular visit to the United States consulate, if there is still a United States consulate in Marseilles, to see if there was any news about his case. A letter of last August says: "To feel that I have friends in your country is one of the very few, if not the only, reality that allows me to hang on and to hope."

The "Javanese" whom Malaquais brought to life for us are distinguished by the fact that they have no passports, no identification papers. For a European few things can be more horrible. Consequently they are continually obsessed, subconsciously as well as consciously, by the feeling that they are unwanted wherever they are. Today those outcast workers

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are wasting away in concentration camps or slaving on the trans-Sahara railway. They have no money to spend in Estève's brothel or to buy a liter of red at Mme. Michel's grocery and wine-shop; there is no more free baklava from the woman Stapoulos. And the only crime most of them have committed is that of having no papers.

Today Jean Malaquais knows better himself what it is to want the necessary papers. His last letter to me, in which he struggles against his bitterness, says: "J'ai le sentiment d'être devenu moralement un clochard" —I feel as if I had become morally a bum.

Probably no one over here knows when "Marianka" was written, but since it has already appeared in a French literary magazine it cannot be very recent. It shows Malaquais' mastery of the brutal technique necessary for describing such scenes of violence. Though the story is laid in a village in the Ukraine between the rivers Dnieper and Pripet during the counter-revolution of 1919, the author could not but have thought also of the crimes being committed every day in his native Poland. Only one other short story by Malaquais has appeared in English: "Lament for Mimiq!" in the July 1940 issue of *Life and Letters Today* published in London. Like "Marianka," it was translated with the author's permission by Antony Manton.

LISTEN, it was quite a small village hidden away among the black soils in Ukraine the Immense, between the arms of the Dnieper and the Pripet, its tributary, on the Government of Chernigov's Western boundary. A village, if one likes to call it that; or rather, a scattering of several farms whose population at that time numbered some thirty souls in all. True, before the war, the number of inhabitants was higher, possibly double. . . . But with war, revolution, bad harvests, the younger men and the stronger men had gradually filtered away, and there only remained at Marianka the old men, the women and us children.

Peasants we were, everyone of us, three Jewish families, two German families, to one of which I belonged, a few Ukrainean families. My parents had settled in the land towards the year 90, at the tail of other emigrants who had preferred to go further afield, towards the Volga. I was born here, and, at this time, in 1919, was approaching my fifteenth year.

It was a troubled period, there were rumours of revolution, famine, epidemics. One day, old Hans Kremmer, my father, brought home with him two deserters, two peasants, who had been

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forcibly enlisted in some armed band. One of them died two days later, following tetanus infection that developed in his left leg, frost-bitten through and through. The other one, his name was Kolenko, Mikhaïl Kolenko, a big ginger-haired fellow with frightened suffering eyes, told us how in November 1918, an autonomous West Ukrainean State had been proclaimed, with a declaration of war against Poland; that in the same December, the 14th, I fancy, a proclamation had abolished the power of the hetman and set up the Directoire. He also told us how we were going to have a land that really would be national and self-governing, that Kiev would be the capital, and a king from a foreign land was about to arrive and would bring peace. In fact, the 3rd of January, 1919, there was a "reunion of the two Ukrainean republics" with, as outcome, war on the two frontiers, East and West.

Today, the "autonomist" movement around the years 1918-1921 has its niche in history books, with accounts of the parts played by the Allies and by Germany, so you know its importance. But, living in Marianka, we were very unenthusiastic about all these bloody upheavals, first to war, then to the revolution, then towards this "independence" which did not seem to herald any good.

Landowners in a modest rural way, our world outlook was bordered by our garden plot, and we hated the armed bands who regularly pillaged our harvests and live stock. "Will this damnable business never cease?" my father would moan as he carved a hunk of bacon from a rib of salted pork hanging from the ceiling. "No . . . ? Never? . . ." he would ask his cabbage soup, his favourite heifer, his ploughshare. We did not know that for him this damnable business soon would cease.

This month of February 1919 was very severe. The cold weather was exceptional, and the celebrated Pripet Falls which never interrupt their rowdy cavalcade froze in blisters near the shore like moist lips in the wind. Chickens froze to death in their hutches; and the wolves, spurred by the cold weather, marauded outside Marianka, a nasty gleam in their desperate eyes.

So it was the month of February, a Friday evening, at nightfall. I was preparing to visit old Master Mellakh, whose house was some forty steps distant from ours. I liked to watch the mysteries surrounding the Welcome to the Bride, to hear the rituals and songs

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of the old Rabbi. "Johan, don't be late home," my mother admonished, "the wolves come as far as Marianka itself." I reassured her, "Of course not, mutti, I shall be home for supper."

Village elder, a pious and simple man, an authority on the Talmud, a great scholar who could interpret the meaning of the divine texts, Master Mellakh was the religious head of the Jewish community in Marianka, the Rabbi, the chanter, the *schokhet.* Because his judgments had a reputation for infallibility, he was asked to settle lawsuits and other quarrels and to shed light on obscure passages in the law. In him his fellow worshippers saw a man of God and so they venerated him, as Jews do, through a veil of sanctity.

A handsome man, still very erect in spite of his seventy-two years, his oval face framed by a long white silky beard, there was something seigneurial about Rabbi Mellakh's appearance. After being twice widowed without children, he remarried late in life for the third time and, at the ripe age of fifty-five, became the father of a daughter, Myriam. To have been denied male progeny, had been the deep sorrow of his life, for who would say the *Kaddisch* after him? However, to be granted a daughter when he had expected to die childless, had gradually transformed this sorrow into love, into that type of fanatical love that only Jewish fathers know.

It was about half past three when I stepped in to see the aged Master, and darkness already had fallen over the countryside. His home was partitioned into one large room, a smaller one where the Rabbi's wife had her grocery shop and a kitchen. The warmth was pleasant. The table in the centre of the main room was covered with a white cloth neatly set for three people. Rabbi Mellakh's wife—she was a well preserved and pretty enough woman—brought in two heavy silver candelabras which she laid on the table. She lit the candles, stood quietly one moment, held her palms above the flame and then, veiling her face with her hands, whispered some prayers.

Master Mellakh soon appeared, impressive, a kind smile in the depth of his good-natured eyes. He was dressed *khassidim'* fashion, in a long clinging tunic of black silk, short breeches, white socks, shiny leather shoes and, for headgear, a massive helmet moulded in long haired skunk.

He strode towards me and patted my shoulder, affectionately:

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"So you have a great love for her, the Bride that God sends to the sons of Israel? . . ."

I agreed with a nod, his Russian was superb, he had the real Petrograd accent. His bearing had something innately noble about it, and he diffused a deep peace that steeped the atmosphere in a wise calm, you know what I mean, like a huge benevolent impulse. His mere presence seemed to create a holiday atmosphere. I don't mean a rowdy, boisterous festival atmosphere, but an intimate joyousness, a feeling of tranquil happiness, almost exclusively a spiritual happiness. Truly, the man had a beautiful personality.

Myriam brought in two Sabbath loaves, setting them down in her father's place. She covered them with a fringed napkin and sat down on the old gentleman's right, pulling her long fair braids on to her lap. She had inherited her father's oval face, a slightly arched nose, and from her mother, the pallid eyes; the delicate mouth was a vivid scarlet.

She smiled at me, bending her head over one shoulder, and one of the braids strayed across her cheek. I blushed violently and turned away, pretending to look for a seat. I noticed a bench against the wall, right next to the door which gave on to a little passage way leading into Marianka. My hostess brought in a bottle of spirits and small liqueur glasses, and Rabbi Mellakh began to murmur the prayers.

Though this was not a total novelty for me, I gazed with great concentration. The fantastic guttural sounds uttered by Rabbi Mellakh, the invocations he seemed to weave in his very soul, the cadenced rocking of the body, somehow cast a spell over my mind, a kind of torpid serenity. My fancy roved to the outposts of creation, I heard the lamentations of a whole nation stranded in the desert. I was present at solemn mysteries inspired—by what association of ideas?—by the tales of Karl May.

The flickering candle light painted a monstrous liquid shadow that at each gesture from the old man darted across the ceiling in both directions like a titanic bat. There, this mobile shadow slyly creeping about was Satan's own shadow and, whipped and tormented by the old man's chanting, Satan writhed in agonies worse than any that hell could generate.

I watched the frightened shadow and wondered, wouldn't it conquer the venerable master? Shroud him in its thick cloak and

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suction him up and fly away with a yell of demoniacal exultation? I looked at Rabbi Mellakh, longed to cry out a warning, but I saw his beautiful hand stroke his white beard and on his forehead I read so perfect a calm that the outcome of the duel at once became apparent; good would conquer evil. Many years after his death I would still torture myself over the perfect balance of his spiritual life, because of the private salvation he so definitely seemed to have attained. If today I see him so vividly, it is because I saw him die as he lived, free from all torment, from all doubt. That is what he was like and doubt had never tainted his soul. He had conquered his will and for him this conquest was a key to the universe and to the future, and everything outside his private salvation was vanity.

But I am wandering from my story. . . .

When I heard Rabbi Mellakh chant, I lost all idea of place and time. Yet, there was no great loveliness in this chanting with its broken, ambiguous rhythms, but the tones of his voice and the strange rumble of the words fillipped my imagination, peopled my mind with heavenly apparitions. When he blessed the bread, his ritual gestures conjured up for me the primitive dances of the birth of the centuries, and when he sang "Today is blessed above all other days" I expected God to come down and be among us. Pictures formed out of the canticle, a natural, intoxicating inspiration possessed me from the psalms. I too sang, a dumb song about forests, rainbows, steep cliffs that bathe in the sea, flowers that drink the sunshine. We were the singers of this world.

* * * *

About an hour and a half later, I was preparing to go home when a woman's shrill cry pierced the atmosphere, heartrending with anguish. It cut into the room through the walls and the windows simultaneously, long, sustained, as though it had a concrete material quality. Almost immediately, footsteps thudded in the dark passage and the door yielded under a strong push. A man stood still, legs wide apart, booted to his knees, the *papaha* pushed back on his head, his right arm clutching an automatic pistol. Other men were outlined behind him, shrouded in the darkness.

With them, the black North wind poured into the room. I shivered. I noticed Rabbi Mellakh get up quietly, and he held out his arm as though in a Roman salute and he said:

"Peace be with you."

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The man with the revolver scrutinised the old man, looked at us in turn, stared at the women. He shrugged his shoulders, by now we all of us were standing, our eyes focussed on his revolver. With it, he motioned his companions and followed by six men came into the room. He said:

"Free followers of the hetman Pétloura, fighting for the liberation of the Ukraine."

"Peace be with you," Rabbi Mellakh repeated.

The door had been left wide open on the freezing arctic night. The country side was blanketed in opaque darkness and you heard the black wind buffet the trees. I moved forward to close the door but received a slap full in the face. It hurled me under the table. Myriam opened her mouth, but stifled the shout with her hand. The old Rabbi stood and helped me to my feet. He said gently:

"Come, there's no reason for grief, Yaniki. . . . Stand up. . . . It did not hurt you, Yaniki, it did not hurt you. . . ."

I rose painfully, the right side of my face was on fire. The ground slid under my feet and everything rocked in a billow-torn sea. My tongue was muddied. I spat and a broken tooth tumbled on the floor, and Rabbi Mellakh pretended to dust my jacket.

"You wanted to close the door, Yaniki. . . . Why didn't you say so? Wait, I will close it."

He moved towards the door and before he got there a punch aimed at his stomach bent him in two. He nearly fell, but desperately stiffened himself and grasped the table edge. His wife and daughter rushed to him, and while the former held the old man, Myriam brought a chair. They wept, bewildered and terrorised, afraid to utter one word, hardly daring to look at the silent intruders.

Through a screen of tears, I saw seven men standing with their legs wide apart. The man who burst into the room first and who evidently was the leader, seemed to be some forty years old, tall, strongly built. The *papaha* pushed back on his head revealed an obstinate forehead, swollen veins and thick flaxen hair, as brittle as blades of corn. I could hardly see his eyes, since they were deeply embedded under the frontal bones and a beard several days old smudged his lower chin with gingerish pools. Furtively, I glanced at his companions; they seemed to have been moulded in the same cast. Rigged out in an astonishing kit, bulging through

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waistcoats and sweaters that either were too short or too long, they were dirty, tattered. Some of them had no riding boots, their legs were swaddled in puttee bands, mud-caked and slipshodly tied, and only their armaments were in perfect condition.

Muted sounds filtered in from outside, again a woman's shriek, the clatter of breaking crockery. A horse whinnied. Then foot-steps crunched on the snow. In the rectangle outlined against the darkness by the open door, two silhouettes loomed nearer, and a man entered the room, striding towards the leader. For a minute they conferred in undertones, laconically, in monosyllables, and the other men stared at the table.

When they had finished speaking, the red haired man went to the table and poured himself out a brimming glass of spirits, and swallowed it in one gulp. He examined his glass through the candlelight, clicked his tongue and poured himself out another helping. Several times he repeated this ceremony, painstakingly, methodically, each time contemplating the contents of the bottle while his companions looked on, also gauging the level of the liquid. When this had diminished half-way, he handed them the bottle, together with his glass, and they helped themselves in turn, each one drank rapidly, in one gulp, as if their whole bodies rejoiced. And, loyal to the leader, they clicked their tongues.

The leader picked his revolver up from the table, pretended to examine the trigger, said:

"Any good?"

"Good," the others replied shuffling their feet.

In the same tones, he pursued:

"So, you bloated cur, you drink good vodka while we fight against the bolsheviks? . . . You dirty Jew, you are in league with the bolsheviks, eh? . . . Like all bloody sheenies, eh? . . ."

He grasped Rabbi Mellakh's beard and roughly shook the old man who looked at him with limpid eyes. Not one groan escaped him. The women hurled themselves on the fellow's arm but roughly he propelled them both to the floor. The others exulted loudly, in merriment, prying eyes rivetted on the women's disordered skirts. Forgetting pain and fear, I ran to help them to their feet. They shuddered like birch leaves.

"I-must-have-ten-thousand-roubles-before-one-hours-time—otherwise . . ." the man chanted.

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Still clutching the aged Master's beard, he pulled the Rabbi's face right close up to his own. Shifty eyes staring into his victim's wide open ones, he repeated once or twice:

"Ten-thousand-roubles . . . Ten-thousand roubles . . ."

With the barrel of his revolver, he drummed on the old man's nose, and with his vodka-infected breath, puffed in the Rabbi's upturned face:

"And those mangy bolshevik dogs won't have that much, anyway. . . . And now get me some food and something to drink."

He loosened his grip. Rabbi Mellakh for one moment longer remained seated on the edge of the chair, his head bent back, in the attitude imprinted by the other's punch. His well-groomed beard was tousled. Heavily, he rose, stood very erect, his delicate bony hand resting on the table. Only now did the shock of the recent rough handling begin to manifest itself, and I saw his hands begin to tremble, irrepressibly, convulsively. But his face, nothing altered its serenity. His lips moved, imperceptibly at first, then more openly, and I at length understood the modulation of the words. As a result of my numerous visits to Myriam's father, I had learnt to recognise many of the prayers and rites: Rabbi Mellakh was reciting the prayer for the dying.

Feverishly, Myriam and her mother busied themselves. Before you could say knife, the table was covered with the choicest goods from the grocery shop. Their haste had a tincture of both the tragic and the grotesque. Crazed with anguish, they ran to and fro excitedly, their arms laden with dishes and bottles, stumbling against the furniture and the walls, shivering like sparrows in this cruel February snow. Rabbi Mellakh was praying.

The man who had remained outside now came indoors, and the nine of them guzzled like famished wolves; obviously, they hadn't eaten for at least twenty-four hours. Bottle followed bottle: no sooner uncorked—no sooner drunk. And as soon as a bottle was emptied, one of the men would take it by the neck and with a brittle snap smash it on the corner of the table. Soon the whole room was tinselled with glass.

The door remained open like the door of a coaching inn where you have a warm drink between a change of horses. Winter had invaded the izba with its sharp, giddying bite. Marianka showed signs of a strange, perplexing activity, unusual sounds

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reached our ears; a rasping of foot-steps on the hard snow, far away, on the white plain; coarse laughs that seemed to congeal, made to sound very near owing to the purity of the rarefied freezing air; the noise of shooting re-echoing fitfully, like a ricocheting ball; then, very far away, a lullaby as old as creation itself, sung in the soft tones of a drunk man. "You shall look like a bogatyr, and you shall have the soul of a kozak . . ." was the burden.

"Mikhaïl Kolenko has been found!"

Like a tornado a man crossed the threshold. The others interrupted their guzzling, mouths full, elbows raised, glasses touching their lips.

"What's that? . . ." said the leader. "What's that? . . ."

His voice was almost caressing. Gently he stroked his chin. The fresh arrival quickly added:

"He was hiding in a peasant's cellar, but Matejko can't be found. Perhaps he too is hiding in somebody's cellar."

"Bring Kolenko! And find me the other bastard!"

The fellow spun round and dissolved in Marianka's glacial darkness. The leader went back to his drink, taking gentle sips, puffing out his cheeks before swallowing, slyly watching the four of us and his companions, a grin on his fleshy lips. With the back of his hand he continued to stroke his stubbly beard and now and then he belched sonorously, with relish. Steps soon grated on the frozen earth and two men appeared, escorting Mikhaïl Kolenko. His arms were tied behind him.

Though the candle light was very faint, Kolenko's frightened eyes blinked as he looked around him. When he recognized the leader, I saw him grow pale and his long giant arms made an effort towards freedom. Someone punched him in the back and he landed up against the table with a thud. At that identical moment, the leader's revolvered hand struck his face, and from the top of his forehead to his chin the revolver butt slashed open the prisoner's face. The blood streamed and its jet blinded the man. He yelled. He bounced backwards, but welcoming arms pushed him forward. He wept like a birched child.

"Ah, so you are back again . . ." said the leader. "You wanted to sneak away, you traitor. . . . Ah, you wanted to sneak away. . . ."

He spoke in the honied tone of a man enquiring after your

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parent's health, it was soft and drawling like the dialect of Southern countries.

Again with his pistol butt he smacked the prisoner's face. He would have stunned him, but Kolenko jumped to one side; even then the metal struck his nose and chipped off a fragment. The man yelled and fell on his knees. His body pitched forward, he rocked sideways, the blood still spurting from his wounds. The others burst out laughing, tickled to see a great tall fellow wriggle like a worm and all because a miserable little bit of nose was missing.

You know, when in fancy I travel back to Marianka, accursed Marianka, under the domination of Pétloura's recruits, I can still hear their boisterous laugh, so soon stinking of vodka, so soon husky with delight. I listen: there's no malice in that laugh, it is the honest and spontaneous laugh that is generated with torture and with the blood of a man yelling for fear. It is because for them life held no meaning, neither their own lives nor other people's, and what we don't drink and embrace today,—well, perhaps, we never shall have a chance to drink and embrace. Instinctively, of human qualities the only ones they possessed were the inhuman ones.

The Rabbi's wife felt ill. While Myriam tearfully ran to fetch more bottles of spirits, the venerable Master and I hurried to the invalid's side. Though she made heroic efforts to control herself, she couldn't master a nervous fit that shook her like a bout of fever. Gasps would escape from her throat, intermixed with hiccups, seeming to float up from her belly to her mouth, and suddenly she was sick, luxuriantly sick, a thick jet that bounced her out of her chair, as if all her insides must gush from her mouth. She cringed in humiliation and shame. Rabbi Mellakh, Myriam and I, we stood helpless and perplexed staring at this ignoble sight, at this lump of living womanhood, horribly tarnished. We made her sip water and pushed her into a chair, but it brought no relief. She continued to hiccup and everytime she was shaken as though by a tidal wave. The knights of the Ukrainean Independence gulped the vodka and laughed.

"Hey, Jew! . . ."

Rabbi Mellakh raised his head. In the old man's eyes shone the immense serenity of the ancient martyrs: what had just happened, what would happen, was ordained. . . .

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"Come here, you!"

The old man didn't answer, he stood as if the command could not have referred to him. I felt nervous for him. "Step forward, sir, step forward. . . ." I whispered to him. He laid his hand on my head lightly pulled me towards him, and stroked my cheek, and I fancied I saw a tear stream down his pale face.

"Come here, Jew!" the hero repeated. And as Rabbi Mellakh still did not answer, he thumped the table:

"Come here, you witch-doctor, or I'll tear your beard off! And a bloody fine beard you've got, too, ha ha ha! . . . Ha ha ha!"

He laughed boisterously; how he did enjoy laughing. . . . A glass in his left hand, a revolver in his right, he guffawed lengthily, with ohs! and with ahs! infecting his companions with his affable mood. Spell-bound and frightened, I stared at them. How they did laugh, if you only could have heard them. Never before had I realised to such a pitch how "laughter disarms." They were so unself-conscious, so care-free, great rough sun-tanned children, innocent even in their cruelty;—or perhaps throw-backs to a stone age primitiveness, when men merely laughed as they killed. Since to laugh seemed to them as natural a function as to kill—it came instinctively—just like eating, drinking, swearing.

At the leader's feet, Kolenko still bled and moaned, rocking his great captive body. The men went on drinking the vodka; the stale sickly fumes dulled their brains and soured the air. You would have thought you were in a brewery. . . . Mingled with their laughter, a sentence would now and then emerge, incoherent, more often than not it was some ridiculous boast, forgiveable for its colossal inanity. One of them began to sing, in a muted voice, a voice that was not too unpleasant, an old song about love and prayer, and he wound up with an oath destined for some real or imaginary Michka. Another recruit took up the song, the same tune, but louder, the bottle in his shaking hand, his voice hoarse with vodka and bestiality. Like the first singer, he ended it with a low curse. Haggard, he gazed at the bottle, and suddenly he yelled, he yelled as a wolf yells, the whole burden of his lungs concentrated in his vocal cords. Bloodshot eyes, yellow teeth gleaming in parted lips, to me he seemed like a malevolent djinn clamouring for the destruction of the world.

The effort made him lose his balance. He oscillated, upright, as a stricken tree totters on its axis before falling. Legs wide apart,

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he threw back his head, stuffed the neck of the bottle deep in his mouth and drank with a real desert thirst. The alcohol gurgled in his throat for a long time, and he drank with closed eyes, fearfully pale, the triangle of his nose so prominent. The vodka poured so quickly, it overflowed down both sides of his mouth and straggled in thin rivulets underneath his knitted collar. He withheld the final mouthful, swilled his teeth with it and spat it out with a crackling noise. Drops splashed my face and the other men laughed and Kolenko writhed in his scarlet pool. The drunken recruit once again contemplated his bottle, now empty, and energetically, he tossed it towards us.

The heaviest fragment hit Rabbi Mellakh's wife in the temple. One second the woman remained standing, upright, stiff, the hiccups had suddenly disappeared, as though you had picked them off her with your fingers; then she bent forward gracefully and before we could hold her, slid to the floor, dragging with her the table cloth. Plates, glasses, bottles, candelabras, everything toppled down with the clatter of a looted shop window and the glass panes broke in splinters and blankets of clotted darkness cut off all light.

Then it all grew hallucinating. The opaque night fencing us in was like a hand squeezing your throat. The men stopped talking, suddenly troubled by the cold and darkness pouring in from the remote, lonely countryside. Space and reality had been blotted out as if a wall had crumbled on to the vast plains and in a dizzying flash I visualized the end of the world, a contorted, chaotic, monstrous vision. It was as though the earth cracked in every surface and lay pulverised by a hundred earthquakes. And suddenly I was mastered by a desire to run away, to flee across the desolate countryside, desperately, straight in front of me.

The candelabras had only tumbled to the floor one moment ago and yet this black suspense seemed to have lasted for hours merging into the ring of silence outside the darkness. Gusts of ice cold air were needling right through me and my teeth began to chatter and uncontrollably I was shuddering all over. I wanted to move forward but my legs were stubborn, magnetised to the floorboards. The recruits had not yet recovered, perhaps they too trembled and longed to escape, perhaps they too thought the end of the world was at hand. I began a yell but smothered it. The blood thumped through my temples, and the stillness was pushing

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down my throat and strangling me like a man's hand intent on business. Ah, these heroes who like me were afraid, who had mislaid their laughter! Against my will, once again, I yelled.

First I heard shuffling feet. Then, cradled by the battering wind, the singing of drunken men. Then the oppressed panting of a straining man. Someone banged his whole weight against the table, drew away, once more banged against it. I heard boots scrape the floor-boards, legs treading a circle, and always that oppressed panting of a horse climbing a steep hill. Someone fought with the darkness.

All at once, a petal of flame burst in a sheaf of sparks. It licked the sky, hailed a partner, and together they danced on a roof. A third linked up with them, then another one, and it looked as if the corolla of a flower was sailing in the night, hanging from the sky by sails of fire. The wind, galloping across the countryside, officiously pranced around the flower, joyfully whistled, flattened the corolla as though to embrace her. She answered with a sharp crackle, gave him a petal and he scudded off with it, still galloping. They rested on a neighbouring barn and at once spawned little live flames, litttle live shimmering flames. The sky's hermetic dome blushed with ecstacy and the entire countryside began to throb in a rhythm of fire and shadow.

In the artificial daylight I could see the man who was entangled in his own legs; Kolenko was trying to escape. He could distinguish the doorway outlined against the flames and thrust towards it, head lowered, his entire body weighted forwards. A bullet lodged in the nape of his neck. He fell head first, his face squashed against the threshold he had wanted to cross. His arms tied behind his back contracted, stiffened like stakes driven into the earth. The binding rope cracked, cracked, and gave. Suddenly free, the arms slid alongside the body, like dead branches. A man cleared the back of his vodka-scorched throat and spat on him, liberally.

All of them, they came back. All, they began to laugh once more, merriness shook them like willow branches in a singing wind, a laugh smelling of fire, of the bullet's soft thud, of spittle. Fire pulsed in their circulations, it set their blood aflame, it set up a craving for more fire.

Severally they set fire to the bed. Then to the table cloth saturated with vodka. Then, with straw drawn from the mattress, they

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set fire to the old dresser reflecting silvered pools. The flames jumped up to the ceiling, joined together, drew apart, sniffed, said they liked this sort of thing, and began to spit, to smoke, to eat with a fine appetite. "You will roast like fleas!" they shouted to us. "Good luck!" and they would not stop laughing and shouting with merriment. "Mind your beard, it's going to shrivel up! We shall pray for your soul, you old body snatcher! Ha ha ha ha!" Stamping over Kolenko's body, they went out by the little passage way.

We remained there, the three of us, with the woman's body, with Kolenko's, and the fire—already a very fierce fire. Almost at the same time as the men left, the bench caught alight. A flame ran down the passage as if in their pursuit, blocking the doorway. It licked Kolenko's head, drew away, came back with reinforcements, stroked it this time, then quickly hugged it in a spiral movement, twined itself around, gently roasted it. The strong blacksmith stench of burning hooves burst through the air and the head seemed to move, its hair become a golden halo.

The first, I regained my senses. The furnace was growing lethal. Another minute and we should be blazing like Kolenko, over there. I shouted out:

"Sir, sir, Rabbi Mellakh, we must get away!"

He remained crouching near his wife's body, the flames dancing a frenzied polka in his staring eyes. Myriam lay across her mother, silent; she never once sobbed; a living creature crucified on a dead one.

My eyes smarted and I fancied I heard my skin crackle, peel off me like a fish's scales. A fit of coughing lacerated my lungs and the smoke and heat were deadly. I grasped the old man by the shoulders, shook him:

"Master, you will be burnt alive! Get away from here! Get away from here! Myriam! Myriam!"

The old man slipped through my hands and fell on his daughter. His lips mumbled prayers. Each little hair in his beard curled like grass at sunset. I yelled:

"Sir! Sir! Myriam!"

The fire creaked with a noise of tearing muscles. The old man didn't answer. I felt ready to flare like a torch, like a log of dry fir-tree. With one last effort, I took Myriam's arm and pulled it towards me. I wanted to get her away, I didn't want her to be

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burnt. I didn't want her to stop living and it was only then I noticed the knife upright in her throat and all the blood on her pale holiday dress.

Where I got the strength, I shall never know. I plunged towards the window frame, head first, with all the strength in my body, falling through like a pebble. I landed on a hillock of snow heaped outside by the old Rabbi when he had cleared the cottage for the Reception of the Bride.

A gust of pure air seemed to restore my wits. Marianka was dissolving in a firework display, in shouts of joy and in shouts of horror. Strident cries that pierced high into the sky and coarse, raucous shouts that grazed the earth. Entirely naked, Marie Baranko, an old woman of sixty, was hobbling in a pool of melted snow, and a man stood behind aiming kicks at her backside. "Dance, you cow, go on, dance!" he said. She danced, bending one leg, then the other one, her breasts, shrivelled like dry salt fish, flapping against her stomach in tune. "Ha ha ha! . . ." the man said, and he kicked her buttocks apart.

Men were running about, and they were firing rifles, and they were stabbing, and they were laughing. A great tall fellow stood silhouetted against the light from a flame, looming like some giant with the shadow he cast before him. By its legs, he held a squealing baby, head downwards, also naked. The man stooped over his burden, delicately kneaded the tiny body as if to test its resistance, then swung the child round and round above his head, beat the air with it and threw. The little burden cut through the air like a catapulted stone, described an arc, and landed with a squash on a flaming wall. One second the man remained tense from the effort, then he laughed with boisterous delight. He turned round, his muscles taut. He clutched an escaping woman, at random, as you might grab a fly in your hand. He bent his prey's neck, saw she was old, and with one knife thrust slit her throat. And still he laughed with boisterous delight.

Pursued by his laugh, pursued by the image of the little naked burden describing an arc under the mauve night sky, I ran in front of me, with all my strength, with my whole desire for life.

* * * *

At dawn, in a furrow of frozen soil, a detachment of red soldiers stumbled on a youth half dead from cold.

Marianka was annihilated.

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A Letter to the Editors

I HAVE BEEN SHOWN the text of a lecture by Mr. Van Wyck Brooks on "Primary Literature and Coterie Literature" and invited to comment upon it. As for Mr. Brooks' judgements on particular authors I am impressed by the catholicity of his distaste: but I have no comment to make except that his description of Dr. I. A. Richards as "a neurological psychologist who lives in England" does not suggest a very intimate knowledge of that author's work. It is not in Mr. Brooks's literary appreciations but in the social implications of his point of view that I am interested: and in these for the reason that I detect a similarity with a point of view which has recently been expressed on this side of the water also. It is a point of view which may be called reactionary, so long as we remember that reaction may move in more than one direction and to different distances; to a more, or to a less civilized condition than that of contemporary society. I hope I am not influenced by the newspaper rumour that my own writings have been condemned by the Vichy Government, as well as by Mr. Brooks: I mention this so that the reader may not suspect that I have any concealed grievances.

The similarity that I find is between Mr. Brooks's point of view and that of a leading article in *The Times* of London on the 25th March, 1941. This article is entitled "The Eclipse of the Highbrow." It has, like that of Mr. Brooks, a warmth of feeling puzzling to those who come under its condemnation, and goes farther than Mr. Brooks in its disapproval of the morals of contemporary writers and artists, whom it characterizes as "often impatient, self-indulgent, intolerant and touchy," as well as possessed of "a weak and arrogant contempt for the common man." (The "common man" of a paper like *The Times* can hardly mean the proletarian—it must mean the man of the educated upper classes.) *The Times* article complains that modern literature is one of "clever triviality," that art is brought down to "the level of esoteric parlour games," and it draws the now familiar comparison of modern poetry to the cross-word puzzle. Though it does not use the term, it holds up exactly the same picture of "coterie" art as does Mr. Brooks.

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The reason for the violence of the *Times's* writer's feelings, as of those of Mr. Brooks, must remain unknown. If either of them was anything of a sociologist, he might have been interested in not merely denouncing modern art, but in enquiring *why* it is what it is. The attack is not made precisely on literary grounds, nor precisely on moral grounds, but upon grounds which are a confusion of the two. For the *Times* writer the virtues despised by the highbrows are "such as endurance, unselfishness and discipline"; for Mr. Brooks "the great themes are those by virtue of which the race has risen [*what race?*], courage, justice, mercy, honour and love." I do not like to be led to held to underrate or despise these virtues: but (unless by "love" Mr. Brooks means *charity* in the theological sense) they are the natural, rather than the Christian virtues; and *justice*, we now know, can mean very different things to different people. Mr. Brooks further employs terms—"the biological grain," "the life-drive," "race-survival"—which are depressingly reminiscent of a certain political version of biology: his literary criterion seems to be conduciveness to race survival "on what might further be called the best possible terms" —what these terms are is not stated.

Literature has at some times and in some places been condemned for infraction of laws of religious orthodoxy*; in some places at some times it has been condemned for infraction of laws of political orthodoxy: but in such a situation we can at least know where we are; and religious and political criteria need not be confused with literary and artistic criteria. In Britain and America we are not likely to find our issues defined so clearly as that: what is more likely is that democracy will be attacked in the name of democracy; that culture will be attacked in the name of culture, literature in the name of literature—even, perhaps, religion in the name of religion. I do not suppose for a moment that Mr. Brooks is aware of these possibilities, or of the tendencies which his views may encourage: but there was never a time when it was more important to think clearly and to define one's terms.

T. S. ELIOT

London
January 5, 1942.

*Mr. Brooks, by the way, confuses heterodoxy with blasphemy.

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Writers and Defeat

Frank Jones

THE LITERARY JOURNALS of France are holding up their heads again, and—considering the circumstances of the resurgence—they manifest astonishing variety and endurance in the intellectual life of the country. One dares not surmise how long the resurgence will last; much of it may succumb to a shortage of paper or of patience in high places; but the tragic and precious evidences it so far affords are to be treasured, whether or not we draw from them a moral for our own experience.

These, as far as I can ascertain, were the principal events of 1941 in French literary journalism. In the unoccupied zone, the *Cahiers du Sud*, organ of the Southern *avant-garde*, issued again from its regular Marseilles office. *Esprit*, a monthly of liberal-Catholic tendencies, moved from Paris to Lyons and resumed publication in January, only to be suppressed in June for views implicit in condemning an anti-Semitic German movie (interestingly titled *Jew Suss*) and quoting Péguy, hero of Catholic socialists: "I shall refuse to obey, if justice and freedom require disobedience."[1] Even *Le Figaro*, quite conservative when a Paris daily, was temporarily banned after maintaining in Vichy territory not only its high literary standards but also considerable freedom of expression on the relation of contemporary literature to society. The venerable *Revue des Deux Mondes* moved toward Vichy geographically, no doctrinal migration being required: it is dull and respectable as ever, and strongly pro-Pétain, pro-Franco, anti-Marx. The *Revue Universelle* also continued, in a very un-universal manner, under the editorship of Henri Massis, an authoritarian Catholic who had long been of philo-fascist persuasions. In Paris, the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, founded by Gide and others in 1909, began a questionable new life as early as December 1940. The Germans were still being 'correct' then, and Herr Abetz was anxious to preserve 'intact' such of the higher things in French life as could be kept politically neutral. Jean Paulhan, the N.R.F.'s editor, was still in Paris, but not neutral: his last editorial before the blitz having offended Nazi susceptibilities, he was imprisoned for a time shortly after Abetz took up the reins of culture. Abetz accordingly replaced him by Drieu la Rochelle, a man with as many

[1]Apropos of the last *PR*'s correspondence about *Esprit*, a remark of its editor Emmanuel Mounier in the May issue is eminently quotable. Pierre Gaxotte, in the course of a plea for press freedom under Vichy, had said: "One cannot imagine a national revolution having recourse to a lie." Mounier commented: "One cannot imagine it, but, as the saying has it, truth can sometimes be improbable."

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political colors as literary friends. Under his guidance the journal began surprisingly well, but it soon took the inevitable course, and Gide, who published sections of his 1940 journal in the December and February issues, severed his connection with it. (He has since written a pamphlet entitled *Retour de la N.R.F.*, which doubtless means both 'return of' and 'return *from*'—the latter on the analogy of his *Return from the U.S.S.R.*) The subsequent tone of the N.R.F. is probably typified by a pronouncement of the greybeard philo-fascist and Academy immortal, Abel Bonnard, in its March 1941 issue: "France has been delivered from the ideas of the revolution of 1789, an outburst of every false value." For what this journal once meant one must look to a quarterly founded by a former associate last July in Buenos Aires: *Lettres Françaises*, edited by Roger Caillois.

Through all this gloom, one can discern in the magazines continuing in France a busy interaction of critical views and political allegiances, in which the *débacle* brings out into harsh light what might once have hidden behind the easy courtesies of literary intercourse. This is true at least of the few issues of the N.R.F. (Dec. 1940; Jan., Feb. 1941) and *Esprit* (Jan., Feb. 1941) which have reached this country. Not only acceptance of the New Order, but aloofness from it and even rebellion against it are represented in the comments made in them by writers known abroad. Even their expressions of acceptance are extremely guarded and usually leave a door or two ajar for the winds of independence. Not one of them comes out in open support of the Pétain regime. But the extent of their fascist potentialities can be gauged in some cases by their political past rather than their literary present, and in others by the force with which they now give vent to their feelings about the 'guilt' of pre-war France. Some of them—Jacques Chardonne, Drieu la Rochelle, Alfred Fabre-Luce—are so obsessed by these feelings that they regard the New Order not only as a punishment richly deserved by the sins of the democrats, but as a lesser menace to the 'true spirit of France' than was the Third Republic. *Plûtot Hitler que Blum* is still their slogan. In others—Morand, Claudel, Henri Massis—the note is primarily one of anger with the old order: no statements or even implications about the new. Then there are the writers who make it pretty clear, with whatever caution, that they resent the national humiliation and see in 'collaboration' little chance of any improvement on the old France, for all its acknowledged defects. Of this group, Duhamel and Mauriac content themselves with a vigorous refusal to cry *Peccavimus*, while Gide and Montherlant indicate profound disquiet as to the condition of France, without, however, pointing the finger at any specific aspect of it. The one rebel in the picture, one who does so point, is Armand Petitjean, whose moving comments on his war experiences—reprinted, in small type, at the very end of the December 1940 *Nouvelle Revue Française*, from the *Journal des Compagnons de France*—conclude with an outcry against

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the 'national shame' of inglorious defeat: "Only shameful natures can put up with it; we shall follow our reaction against it to the bitter end."[2]

Of all these groups the most pathetic—and, one might say, the most significant from an American point of view—is that of the climbers, from all over, onto the Hitlerite bandwagon. They show how varied are the approaches to fascism open to modern European man. Mere horror of modernism in the arts (*Kulturbolschewismus*); a metaphysical thirst for the One in the Many; politically authoritarian forms of Catholicism; rationalization of personal disequilibrium into a continental malady, with consequent vague calls for 'discipline' as the cure—as one might prescribe exercise and fresh air for neurasthenics; or, simply, a keen awareness of the futility of international politics as played by sovereign nations since 1918—all these may lead to a sneaking fondness for Hitler or at least to a stuffy pretence of nobility and self-sacrifice *à la* Pétain. Many are combined in Drieu la Rochelle, the new editor of the N.R.F.

Despite his fascist sympathies, Drieu is no contemptible figure. Besides being a novelist of distinction, he brings a fluid intelligence to political questions: too fluid, to be sure, but hardly in a class with the bloated brooding emotionalism of literary fascism as practised in Germany. His diagnoses and prognoses of the European disease are as acute as his political ideals are confused. Both the acumen and the confusion are apparent in his most important book, *Socialisme Fasciste,* a collection of political essays published by the *N.R.F.* in 1934. One of them, 'The Next War,' predicted not only the time of the present cataclysm but many of its leading events to date. Though vitriolic on French political parties of all degrees of leftness and rightness, he pointed out the perils of dictatorship on the Hitler-Mussolini model as a government for France, and issued a grave warning against any rapprochement between France and Germany on the flimsy basis of opposition to communism. All this is sound enough; and even now one may dare to hope that he has not sunk to the level of Laval's Anti-Soviet Legion or the conception of Pétain as Our Leader piously advanced by the *Revue des Deux Mondes.* But other suggestions on policy in the crisis he so clearly analyzed at that time manifested the troubled oscillation which fascism steadies for its own ends. On the one hand, he deplored the violence inculcated in fascist youth and condemned militarism in general, even avowing great sympathy with absolute pacifism; on the other, speaking of fascism as 'a pure theocracy in which the spiritual and the temporal are at last commingled,' he declared: "And yet I want it. Liberty is done for, and man must steep himself again in the dark foundations of his being. I say this, I, the intellectual, the lover of

[2]According to *La France Libre,* this issue of the *NRF* was seized by the Germans. Petitjean's words are doubtless the reason. Over and above their dangerous implications, he takes as his text a quotation from Malraux' *Days of Wrath,* which of course is now banned in France. In general, as *La France Libre* says, all French accounts of the late-lamented war with Germany are being suppressed: "Les Français doivent oublier qu'ils se sont battus contre l'Allemagne hitlérienne." So Petitjean's outburst joins Duhamel's *Chronicle of the Year 1939* and Roland Dorgelès' *Return to the Front:* good company. Petitjean has since resigned from the N.R.F., at the same time as Gide.

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liberty." He accepted fascism as part of the European destiny because, in one sense the last outpost of capitalism, in another it seemed to bear the seeds of 'non-Marxist socialism'—socialism without class war, the cardinal point of his creed. (Incidentally, he also predicted the fall of Thyssen.) He was not alone in believing Hitlerism to be a genuine new order, but he was so impressed by the socialist element in national socialism—and the nationalist element in Stalinism—that he put Moscow, Berlin, Rome, Ankara, Warsaw and Washington (as of 1934) all on the same level for French political parties to look up to. He admitted that the alleged 'dynamism' of Hitler Germany was really static and rigid, but in all these reform movements he saw 'a moral force, a disposition to sacrifice, a will to struggle' which seemed lacking in the 'senile corruption' of French politics. As for the cause of international order, a political union of Europe, he said: "After all, it seems to me no harder to teach the European necessity to fascist countries in which, willy-nilly, the socialist ferment is at work, than to teach it to hypocritical democracies." And so: "I shall perhaps work—I have doubtless worked already—for the establishment of a fascist regime in France; but I shall remain as free toward it tomorrow as yesterday."

Such is the extraordinary figure who has taken over what was the best and most advanced literary journal in Europe, a consistent champion of the greatest names, the freest spirits in French literature from Proust and Gide to Giono and Malraux. Yet there are several good things to be said of his editorship—at least up to last February. He went on printing Gide, Petitjean and Montherlant, presenting their continued independence and reserve of judgment to the harassed public of occupied France; and he even planned to print something of Malraux (though this probably never got beyond an advance notice). In his own editorials he did not commit himself to any uncritical enthusiasm even for Pétain, let alone Hitler; nor did he open the columns of literary liberalism to the savage outbursts against the 'corrupting' literature of the Twenties and Thirties which resounded through certain other French journals after the defeat. But, for all that, what a fall from the genuine democratic vitality of the N.R.F.'s politics under the editorship of Paulhan in 1939 and 1940! Just before the war broke out it had even published the first French translation from Bert Brecht's series of fierce dramatic sketches, *Terrors and Miseries of the Third Reich*—probably a record in anti-fascism among established French reviews; and up to the last, Julian Benda, Petitjean and many others had contributed articles—often slashed by the pro-fascist war censorship—condemning appeasement and preaching all-out resistance to Hitlerism. Now, of course, existing in Paris on sufferance of an even worse censorship, forbidden to publish Benda (a Jew) and deprived of Petitjean (a patriot), the N.R.F. can hardly be expected to keep up that record. But even Drieu seems to have been undergoing a political *crise de conscience* in the early stages of his editorship. At any rate, his editorials are a good deal less pro-fascist than what he was saying in 1934. In the

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first of them (written in the shelter of the German-Soviet pact) he even drops a faint hint of sympathy with the French communists: "If France had made a revolution in '34 or '36, a fascist revolution or a communist revolution, she would not have made the war of 1940, for she would have placed herself in a clearer, more modern position with regard to Germany." This can mean either that France would not have fought the war of 1940 or would not have lost it: the ambiguity is doubtless intentional. Nor is there much in his other political comments beyond the familiar condemnation of France's policy between wars and the familiar commendation of such winning attributes of fascism as free physical culture for all. ("The evil lies in the forgetting of the body.") Tactfully, he concludes his first pronouncement—a brilliant refutation of the view that the French are a moderate people—with the words: "I should have liked to talk about Europe, about today's France in today's Europe. Another time. There two passions are jostling one another, but they are capable of joining forces." A meaningless enough remark. He seems to be striving to preserve that 'freedom in the face of fascism' of which he spoke eight years ago. One wonders how long it lasted.

And yet Drieu and men like him are zealously working for fascism by broadcasting their special views of it through the N.R.F. The oddest case of this is a 'Letter to an American,' by Alfred Fabre-Luce, in the December 1940 issue. Fabre-Luce has been a 'collaborationist' for years: among other things, his dislike of the Versailles treaty and what it stood for led him early to pro-German sympathies, which now apparently extend to the invader. Here he purports to be answering a letter in which an American friend let slip a suggestion that he, Fabre-Luce, might be unhappy in occupied Paris. The Frenchman unleashes an almost lyrical description of the 'ennobling' effects of the German occupation on a city once febrile with 'haste' and teeming with 'parasites'. Haste and parasites have vanished; quiet and dignity return; "German and Frenchman are learning many things about one another that proximity did not suffice to teach them. . . . Only now, before this new horizon, do we understand that we had been lacking half the world." French liberty?—"Another race is taking shape, a race that will perhaps be able to enjoy liberty to the full because it will be worthy of it. . . . Do not believe that we are thinking of some sort of revenge. Henceforth we shall seek greatness in a new direction." The new direction appears to be toward a united Europe, impoverished and noble—the impoverishment being laid to the 'guilty men' who kept France divided, the nobility to the people who have now been freed of them. In the end, it seems, the Spartan virtues will triumph over economics: "Tomorrow the U.S.A. will not be able to withstand the competition of a disciplined and impoverished Europe." The letter ends on a note of pity for America, reversing the American's pity for France: unless we soon get rid of our money and gross materialism, we will be too late for the New Age. (In summary, the article sounds like some grotesque attempt at satire, but it is in deadly earnest.) An equally imaginative note is

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struck by Paul Morand in the same issue. He likens the Daladier-Reynaud 'war-mongers' to Don Juan: 'men without pity' who kept leading the bourgeoisie to a fate worse than death, by way of currency devaluations and things, until Hitler appeared as the Commandant and froze them in his fist of stone. "France has fallen victim to the warmonger she loved, and in her death agonies she thinks to save the life of the husband who poisoned her. Don Juan and our hero of yesterday—two hypocrites!" (There is some satisfaction in that this confirms what one had always felt about Paul Morand.)

It is the old trouble of the rootless intellectual, which finds as many 'solutions' as there are sufferers: pacifism, mysticism, communism, fascism embraced primarily as refuges from the torment of separateness, the curse of Ishmael. The particular pathos of these French converts to fascism lies in the way they cling to the concept of liberty. "I fear nothing," Drieu said in 1934, "because I want nothing. Who will ever stop me from talking? My subtle pen will always elude constraint." Fabre-Luce's 'freedom from materialism' really means release from the exacting communal needs of a world whose politics—'election squabbles' as he contemptuously calls them—reflect the complexity of its economic structure. The sense of defeat, of helplessness before such a world then brings on a hankering after the Strong Man. In Chardonne this reaches an extreme of irresponsibility: he becomes aware of the barricades only after their breach, and promptly scuttles to the safe side. In him the longing for social order *plus* individual liberty is a matter of animal faith, having little to do with the pale cast of thought. So he can say, with a *simplisme* even Drieu and Fabre-Luce would be incapable of: "The spirit of France is in safe keeping. . . . At first events seem dark and terrifying; much later they will be explained, they will seem natural and almost always favorable." This, perhaps, is the consolatory process Cocteau has been going through. After Munich he expressed his outraged feelings in a sombre poem, *Les Incendies*, which contains these words: "The evil chants from Nuremberg entered this richly painted landscape. . . . And the poet, brought to his feet by the wind of extraordinary catastrophes which makes the harp of his nerves vibrate, swore to himself that death would not take him alive." Now he is reported to be on excellent terms with the authorities in Paris; and his activities include writing for a new magazine edited by Alphonse de Chateaubriant, a novelist, fascist and country gentleman who never missed a Nuremberg rally. The truth seems to be, not simply that these welcomers of fascism are 'Irresponsibles', but that they are too fond of their 'freedom' as individuals to shoulder *either* the responsibility of active vigilance over the limited liberties accorded them by a limited democracy *or* the responsibility of detachment and independence which they bear as intellectuals. Hence their capitulation to a system which will grant them freedom from both these burdens. Hence their significance for Americans exposed to analogous temptations which grow stronger every day.

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One turns with relief to that arch-priest of rational detachment, André Gide, who published two new installments from his journal in the N.R.F. before it grew too reactionary for him. His comments have their pathos too, but it springs from integrity, not corruption. Some characteristic ones: "If I sense unlimited potentialities of acceptance within me, it is because they do not in any way involve the essential being. Thought runs far worse dangers in allowing itself to be dominated by hate. As for restricting my comforts, my pleasures, I am ready. To tell the truth, my aging body has little use for them. Perhaps things would not be the same if I were twenty, and I think that young people are more to be pitied today than old men." (One younger man's comment on the situation, in an editorial in *Esprit,* runs: "The war is lost. It remains for youth to bring to fruition the greatest revolution of modern times." More intentional ambiguity?) "If, as is to be feared," Gide continues, "freedom of thought, or at least freedom to express thought, is denied us tomorrow, I shall try to persuade myself that art and even thought will lose less thereby than in an excess of liberty. . . . We are entering a period in which liberalism will become the most suspect and the least practicable of virtues. But I am trying to persuade myself that it is in non-liberal epochs that the free spirit attains its highest excellence." The uneasiness of this stoicism is more apparent in a blistering attack of his on Chardonne, which appeared in the *Figaro.* In it he characterizes Chardonne by words appropriate to the entire group I have been discussing: "In the crucible of this mind everything gets melted down, mixed up, volatilized, muddled and lost. Thanks to this he attains without difficulty (*non dolet*) a state of superior ataraxia. . . . Thanks to him, we become fully aware of ourselves. As he delights in his own vagueness he describes it to us so well that he makes us wish, more energetically and deliberately, to get out of it. Before his fluidity, his inconsistency, (if I may judge from myself) we feel more keenly our own firmness, and, before so many hazy acquiescences, our constancy."

The Gide-Chardonne battle is only one aspect of a further development in French literary journalism under the New Order, a development that is also very close to home. Scarcely a month had elapsed after the blitzkrieg when certain French writers of fascist propensities began to lay part of the blame for the disaster on the main literary trends of the post-Proust era, calling them amoral, over-refined, destructive and other adjectives heard over here recently from people who ought to know better. The leaders of this attack, which, under the slogan 'Les Mauvais Maîtres', raged well on into 1941, were Camille Mauclair, an old art- and Mussolini-fancier, Henry Bordeaux, a best-selling novelist and Academician, and Henri Massis, editor of the *Revue Universelle,* who distinguished himself some years ago by initiating a mock trial of Gide before a 'court' of intellectuals to clear up the question of his alleged dangerous influence on French youth (Gide won hands down). The movement gained some support from bigger men ,such as Claudel, who reproved the 'barrenness, lack of

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charity, and unhealthy and depressing atmosphere' of some post-World War I French wrting, with the qualification that "the good in the higher spheres of our literature more than compensated for the bad." If this flurry of recrimination is remembered at all it will be for the retorts it provoked from Duhamel, Mauriac and Gide: statements of the real values in French culture, words particularly heartening as coming in these days from France herself. Duhamel: "French writers were going about the task undertaken by their forerunners centuries ago: to describe humanity, observe events and manners, and draw instruction from life. Nothing is more worthy of their efforts." Mauriac, whose Catholicism is singularly free from the taint of reaction, published a long and eloquent statement of admiration for writers as diverse as Bergson, Maurras, Valery, Claudel, Proust, Gide, Montherlant, Giono and Malraux, concluding with the words: "On the morrow of a crushing defeat, let us not be taken in by the niggardly, envious or knavish men who presume to exact a synthetic moralism from the writers of France. Let us not become accomplices of the impotent creatures who are convinced, in the great silence after the cyclone, that their turn has come at last. . . . After our disaster as before it, great books will remain great books; and, for all their sublime principles, writers who are nothing will not cease to belong to nothing." And Gide, as usual, crystallizes the issue in a sentence: "To me it seems as absurd to incriminate our literature with reference to our defeat as it would have been to congratulate it in 1918, when we were the victors."

Such are the literary repercussions of the force that has wrought havoc in the senior culture of Europe. A sentence comes to mind from a still older one, that of the *Thousand Nights and A Night:* "Mine is a tale which, were it engraved on the corners of the eyes with needle-gravers, were a warning to whoso would be warned."

Note

The bulk of this article is based directly on issues of the N.R.F. and *Esprit.* The rest comes from sources included in the following list:

The Nation, Dec. 6, 1941: 'Literature of the French Defeat.' Jan. 10, 1942: 'A Letter from France.'

The New Republic, Dec. 22, 1941: Marc Slonim, 'French Writing Today.'

The Living Age, April 1941: Eugene Jolas, 'Letters and Arts in Wartime Europe.' May 1941: Henri Longa, 'The Eclipse of the French Press.'

Partisan Review, Jan.-Feb. 1941: William Petersen, 'What Has Become of Them?' Sept. Oct. 1941: Victor Serge, 'French Writers, 1941.' 1941.'

Horizon (London), Nov. 1941: 'Letter from France, II.' Part on N.R.F. reprinted in *Poetry* (Chicago), Jan. 1942.

The New Statesman (London), Oct. 18, 1941: 'The Continental Press.'

La France Libre (London), June 1941: 'Chronique de France: Culture et Société.' Dec. 1941: Denise Aymé, 'Quelques Revues Françaises.'

Lettres Françaises (Buenos Aires), July and Oct. 1941: 'L'Actualité Littéraire.'

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Art Chronicle

Sweeney Soby and Surrealism

THE PROGRESSION OF MODERN ART differs from that of past periods in its dependence upon illustrated books. Exhibitions come and go, but volumes and catalogs (particularly when compiled as ambitiously as those issued by the Museum of Modern Art*) remain behind for leisurely contemplation. I dwell upon the writings of James Sweeney and James Soby rather than upon the shows of Miró and Dali which they arranged respectively and simultaneously last December because they represent a trend in contemporary criticism which I do not think adequately pursues the function of the critic. Both writers manage to be specific and accurate when they are dealing with picturesque details; anecdotes and quotations are documented in a thoroughly businesslike manner. But when esthetic matters are approached the writers become either so general or so inaccurate that the public must be very much confused.

The two Spanish painters are quite justly put forward as enemies of abstract painting. ("Have you ever heard of greater nonsense than the aims of the abstractionist group?" asks Miró. "This model mental debility called abstract art" Dali jeers in a chapter called the *Abject Misery of Abstraction-Creation.*) To get over some possible obstructions of a personal order let me say that I do not believe that this has stood in the way of my appreciation of either artist. Miró I have long considered the most important painter of his generation; in Dali, on the other hand, I have never found much beyond a slick presentation of unexpectedly-juxtaposed objects, double images, etc., that sound much spookier in words than they appear when realized by Dali. Even so it is not with Dali's platform that I quarrel, which impelled by a distinguished sensibility might conceivably produce fine paintings. (But I do not share enthusiasm for his technical equipment, for before discussing it one should qualify the meaning of "technique." If it means merely that he paints tightly, without ever slopping over the contour-lines, then Dali is a good technician, along with Sheeler, Blume, and many others. But this is not so difficult a feat as it is usually considered by non-painters if one uses fine sable brushes after sandpapering the canvas, and *particularly* if one cares nothing for keeping the parts keyed into any sort of structural fabric. For me technique is something more complicated and internal than this.)

Let us now return to the manner in which the two painters are being presented. I support Sweeney and Soby in emphasizing their anti-abstract tendencies but I feel that they both present the crucial point in a way

*Joan Miró, by James Johnson Sweeney; *Salvador Dali*, by James Thrall Soby. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. $2.00 each.

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which is thoroughly misleading. Each devotes considerable space to maintaining that his respective artist passed through a period when he understood and followed the Cubist and abstract tradition which he later saw through and rejected. Whereas in reality neither artist ever penetrated very deeply into the subject at all. Miró obviously acquired his ability to coördinate shape, color, and line from abstract painters (particularly Arp) but his work always depends strongly on representational suggestions. He never got very far inside the picture surface and he added nothing to the solutions of the abstract problems. Had he done so it would have seemed quite out of key with an expressive range which has always fitted his very direct realization without a strain. Sweeney quotes him as announcing "for a thousand men of letters, give me one poet!" Had Miró been just a little more a man of letters perhaps his work would not have been declining so sadly since 1933; but this is neither here nor there, because only a very pure poet could have produced the fine mural-canvases of that year. It is Sweeney who misleads by putting him forward as something he is not.

Dali is inflated even more preposterously, for he never imbibed anything from abstraction either through instinct or study. The barren and feeble 1925 *Harlequin* plainly shows that he was never even aware of the problems, although Soby tells us that "he showed remarkable virtuosity in painting Cubist works." Just the rendering of a lob-sided object at some point in his career is not proof that an artist knows all about Cubism and abstraction. Benton, Biddle, Rivera, etc., tell us similarly that they passed through the "isms" and found that they were all the bunk; if one disinters their efforts in this direction one easily agrees that they *are* the bunk. The illustrated sample of Dali's abstract period performs a similar service.

It is perhaps natural that from such an external method of art-presentation a book upon Dali should provide more interest than one on Miró. Certainly a sort of obtuse "fun" is provided by standards that so completely affront any known canon of taste. Dali exclaims "One thing is certain, I hate simplicity in all its forms." He loathes all modern architecture except what he calls the "undulant-convulsive style." Anything functional or mechanical that surrounds him he conceals in living shapes; his sofa is made to resemble Mae West's lips, a telephone is hidden within a plaster lobster. The trouble with all this is that it is never as funny in reality as it sounds in print. Soby takes it all very seriously and poses the quaint question: "one may ask which type of architecture more accurately diagnosed the hidden psychosis of the years just before the war: *machines à habiter*, with their flat white roofing and broad areas of glass; or the small, dark, womblike houses which Dali proposed to build as retreats from a mechanical civilization and which now, as portable air raid shelters, cover the landscape of England."

The gravest charge against Soby is his ignorance of modern painting. Unlike Sweeney, Soby does, to be sure, grant that Surrealism has not

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demolished the abstract movement, which "continues to thrive, nourished on Picasso's boundless energy, Mondrian's dogma, and Miró's inventiveness." But what is any one to say who has just read in Sweeney's book that Miró's inventiveness is directed *against* abstraction? Who knows further that Picasso's energy is also directed against abstraction, and that Mondrian's "dogma" produced some beautiful Mondrians but not much else? On another page he talks of Bérard's "enigmatic, central position in recent Parisian art." I do not pretend to have penetrated all the Soby circles in Paris, but I did visit many exhibitions; I never saw a canvas by Bérard or even heard his name mentioned.

Sweeney is stylistically more confusing than Soby. He employs the most ambitious figures of speech which, for me at any rate, never quite have any meaning. When the intent is to be just picturesque I find it merely pompous: "within the rhythms of his compositions the slow movements of a Spanish dance will suddenly burst into those of a Catalan Sardana with its intoxicating swing and wistful skirl of pipes." The real danger is more evident when the question becomes one of esthetic approach, as when he is telling us how the cubists and others went "dangerously far" in denying the descriptive possibilities of painting, until Miró's generation "recognized the importance of a renewed stress on spiritual values in painting." Evidently Sweeney denies spiritual values to Cubism; but what are *spiritual* values anyway? I think a question is opened up here which cannot be dismissed so summarily.

Because of such general terms I find many of the points difficult to argue. "Gaiety, sunshine, health—color, humor, rhythm; these are the notes that characterize the work of Joan Miró." I can only suggest that Miró's finest works are for me gloomy, nocturnal and neurotic. Sweeney continues on his first note until this final wistful skirl: "Miró's vitality, laughter, naive lyricism and love of life are, today, auguries of the new painting in the new period which is to come." This does not make me look forward very eagerly to the future; perhaps he was thinking of the present exhibition at the Metropolitan entitled *On the Bright Side*, in which the director has selected a large number of cheery American paintings with which to cover the cases of Japanese porcelains.

GEORGE L. K. MORRIS

Three Current Art Books

Vlaminck. By Klaus G. Perls. The Hyperion Press—Harper. $3.50.
Paul Klee: Paintings, Watercolors, 1913 to 1939. Edited by Karl Nierendorf. Introduction by James Johnson Sweeney. Oxford University Press. $6.
They Taught Themselves: American Primitive Painters of the 20th Century. By Sidney Janis. Dial Press. $3.50.

It is possible to get away with murder in writing about art. In the text which he supplies for this latest book of Hyperion's series on modern

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artists, Mr. Perls discharges himself disingenuously of the obligation to discuss Vlaminck's painting. There is so much disagreement in matters of taste, says Mr. Perls, so few fixed criteria, and it is so hard to pin a work of art down, as it should be, by definition in terms of emotional experience, that "it follows that a book on Vlaminck should not contain a discussion of his artistic qualities." Instead we get biographical facts, valuable enough in themselves, and gush. Mr. Perls should be ashamed of his book. He must have seen much more of Vlaminck's work than all but a few of us, and he should have felt an obligation to describe the development of Vlaminck's art, at least factually, for the benefit of his admirers, most of whom like myself wonder by just what steps this great but not greatly publicized artist came to paint the way he has for the last fifteen years or so. I know, Vlaminck is a repetitious painter, and it is difficult to describe a progression through repetition. But as difficult as that may be, one does not write about art in the first place without being ready to confront the difficult. The physical qualities of this book are of a piece with its text. However, as bad as the numerous color plates are, their colors are so uniformly off that an indication of their abstract relationships to each other in the original survives, and thus you can get some notion or souvenir of Vlaminck's real quality.

They Taught Themselves is first-hand writing about art. It contains a series of descriptive monographs and biographical sketches covering thirty "naive-primitive" American painters of this century, with black and white reproductions of their work. Many of these artists, and some of the best of them, were discovered by Mr. Janis himself, and his book is a record in a way of the operations of his taste, which is spontaneous, cultivated, and of a catholicity that must mean an immense delight in painting for its own sake. I have many objections to the way Mr. Janis writes and to some of his assertions, but behind every one of his choices is a good reason, even if each is not, as André Breton claims, "an intellectual event, or a landmark in the direction of mystery and fire." Nevertheless, it is my opinion that save for the matchless Rousseau—who was, I suspect, more a deliberate than a naive primitive—most contemporary primitive painters are overrated, especially the French: Bombois, Bauchant, Vivin, Eve, et al., all of whom are somewhat spoiled. Cultured painting, for all the crimes of its exponents, has a power to multiply sensations and suggestions that very little primitive painting can equal. And if it is true that some of Mr. Janis's artists can take a place in the front ranks of American painting, it is a sad reflection on our painting. Yet it is true, and it is sad. Morris Hirshfield, to whom Mr. Janis rightly gives the most space, would hold his own against any competition, but if Pickett, Sullivan, Frouchtben, and Tourneur, as good as they are, (not Kane, who is overrated) seem so good by comparison to what is shown at the annual Whitney exhibitions, then American painting is in a bad way. . . . I wish Mr. Janis had given more space to Tourneur, whose work I discovered for

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myself in Washington Square at about the same time Mr. Janis did. His small pinkish landscapes are even more remarkable than "The Siwanoy Night Patrol," which is reproduced in this book. Tourneur's case points out the need to make some generic distinctions between these self-taught painters. There are those whose art is closer to that of children and primitive peoples, dateless in everything except subject matter; these are true primitives or naifs; and then there are those who have acquired something of the technical competence of our civilization yet retain an essential naiveté because of their isolation from culture; these I would call eccentrics. There are also intermediary cases. It is significant that most of the naive-primitives began painting in earnest relatively late in life when they were too old to become professional and no longer adaptable enough to turn commercial. It is this late start which has preserved them.

The Klee book is made up of sixty-five well-executed black and white reproductions in chronological order. The only fault to be found is that over half of the pictures reproduced date after 1932, when Klee's best work was behind him, and his style had begun to harden and lose its precious lightness. But this hardness and this heaviness are somewhat attenuated in black and white; the most characteristic perfection of Klee may be missing, but there is enough else. Mr. Nierendorf's biographical and bibliographical notes are informative and, refreshingly enough, written with restraint. And Mr. Sweeney in his introduction goes directly to the center of critical gravity, resorting to almost none of the subterfuges of impressionistic appreciation by which most writers on art try to evade the arduous responsibilities of analyzing it. I object, however, to his insistence upon the "poetry" in Klee's art. It is possible to say that all art is successful by virtue of its "poetry," but it does no good then to attribute a large amount of it to one great artist and a lesser amount to another equally great one. Is Beethoven more poetic than Bach? If Klee's poetry is produced by an "ambiguity of plastic relations which speaks through all its elements instead of merely relying on what it means," is Renoir's art any less poetic?

CLEMENT GREENBERG

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Poems

A Note by the Editor

Most of the younger contemporary poets have to hurdle the overlapping barriers of fashion and taste. One is inescapable, and the other necessary. We all recognize the dangers of fashion, of not being able to surmount it, but little is said about the no lesser dangers of not being able to surmount good taste. This is an age of good taste in literature, and what displeases me in so much of the competent work of our younger poets is the timidity good taste enforces. These poets go no further than a general good taste, which has been established for the moment by their admiration of Yeats, Stevens and Auden, will take them. Their care to be smooth and correct outweighs every other concern, and they smooth and correct out of their over-contrived verse all the resistances of the personal, temperamental, all the necessary awkwardness and faux pas of original creation. But the poet who allows himself to write only in the way he feels he must write, regardless of taste and fashion, and who wrestles with and exploits, rather than evades, the difficult material offered by his own temperament—such a poet goes further than taste can guide him. And for this reason, whether or not he really is a poet is decided very quickly.

By taste I do not mean the *discipline* of poetry; in going beyond taste the poet does not go beyond discipline, but extends it to new areas, incorporates new regions into the domain of poetry. Nor do I necessarily mean by this Experiment. The poet writes in a new way only because he has to, not because he wants to. And often he does not have to write in a new *way* in order to write new poetry.

Except for Thomas' ballad I have selected the poetry here from unsolicited manuscripts. It represents no one tendency, but it avoids, I hope, two: the tendency of current good taste and the tendency of the enthusiastic ego. None of these poems point out as definitely as would certain poems by Auden and Barker the directions in which for the lack of anything better I hope English poetry will go, but they do point them out to some extent. They have in common, I believe, spontaneity, the comparatively successful digestion of influences, and they show distortions that result from the effort to deal with resistant material. What is more, in accepting form they accept it as something to be emphatic with, not to be surrendered to.

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Isabella Fey

PALINGENESIS

Eros, once winged and beaked and spurred
In the full regal panoply of bird,
Plunged out of heaven through unrestraining skies
(uttering such keen tumultuous cries)
He struck at earth with space-engendered shock,
Rutted the soil and crushed resistant rock,
Shattered great deeps that cleft the planet's core,
Furrowed new seas where lands had stretched before,
Clawed up whole forests, devastated plains,
Made deserts green with pinion-driven rains—
Thus did the heavenly groom with swift, death-gaitered stride
Trample the splendor of his own appointed bride.

Deafened and amazed
The old gods gazed:
'Is he of us? Is this the flightsome beast
Through whom ourselves released
A secret, devious immortality?
Let us bind him with flesh and muffle him with sad banality.'

Behold now Eros as the midnight groom,
Prisoned in flesh and bound to the narrow room,
The licit cubicle, the lawful wife,
Skulking progenitor of rich-crawling life.
Yet what can *she* know of outer wings and space
Who takes the body, guessing not the face?
She, slumbering bride, the designated ground
Wherein new forms and wild new deaths abound?
She, the poor earth, forbidden to behold
The countenance of her midnight lover bold?
Silence and darkness check his golden flight,
The bird of noon constrained to move in night.

So do they meet in dull cohabitation
To spawn a grovelling breed with each new visitation,
And all her many-chambered mansion teems

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With furtive flow of dank subluminous dreams;
She sleeps in a pale sunless watery bloom,
In shallow seas or deep pelagic gloom,
Submerged in the lifting of an endless tide—
Yet now she feels strange agitations ride
Those lunar frequencies—she stirs
Breathing a life familiar but not hers;
The sweet-stabbing knowledge of an alien breath
Lifts her from slumber as from drowning death;
Out of milleniums the separate moments rise
To pluck at her eyelids and her darkened eyes;
Rising from ocean's blind profundities, she breaks
Into the glittering present—and awakes.
Through sleep's yet clinging mist
She sees him: Only the flexing wrist
And knee and elbow bent
Tell of his aquiline descent.

Vision of space! The lineal god revealed
Of cosmic road and interstellar field!
His beaked narrow profile testifies to flight
Through rage of suns and parabolas of light;
So the unfeathered angel sleeps beneath her gaze
Still faintly radiant with a cometary blaze.
Vision of space! And weeping woman bent
Over this unguessed royal lineament;
Not one of her billion-billion tried, discarded forms
Took shape of suns or deliverance of storms;
All her vast brood through paleozoic time
Prisoned in radial symmetry and lime—

She bends and broods; her slow tears drip
Hot wax upon his cheek and lip.
Scalded from dream he leaps to meet the eyes
Forbidden by gods most ancient and most wise;
And in the abrupt second, all his archangelic shape
Returns: the aquilated head, each arm a cape
Of heaven-defying feathers, while his feet
Make tattered fury of the bridal sheet,

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And the wide beak shrieks planetary calls
That split her drums and crack the sentinal walls;
He flutters in air, repels with merciless tine
The clutch of this rapt concubine;
Ribboned with blood she falters, and the bird
Screaming in pitch too piercing to be heard,
Assaults the low ceiling, topples stone on stone
And mounts upward through sunlight to his natural throne.

O Thou! Mother of being, rise to thy new-found feet,
Blinded by light, yet drink this sunlight sweet,
Bright airs of heaven animate thy breath,
Disclose new heavens in the midst of death!
Tight in one hand that trembles still
She grasps a long bronzy quill,
Red witness torn from that aspirant wing,
Cloud-scrivener, the pen of gods, seraphic thing
Sharpened for new inscribings on her heart.
O lancet hostage, O celestial dart!
Rise, foam-born wonder, charioted on shells,
Landward thy winds are set, and air-borne bells
Supplant the old music of the ocean waves.
Deserting old reefs and myriad salty graves
She moves triumphant—O be swift
Towards those who wait upon thy sovereign gift;
Dear Psyche, newly-waked, set forth to hill and plain
On thy long, incomparable odyssey of pain.

Jackson Mathews

TO WHITMAN

Good old miracle man walking with a wand
Like a walking-stick, breathing a warm wind
To panic the buds with new life, the birds
With heavenly wonder, last of the bards,

You waved your stick, chanted your oracle
Till even the cheapest sparrow felt the logic

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Brighten among his feathers like a magic
Making him nothing but a miracle:

You willed us, Walt, in your miraculous codes
'Real gardens with imaginary toads.'

But the comfortable curl of cur on my hearth
Points an ear at phantoms that he hears
Keening above the range of his master's ears,
And winks. He knows what a miracle is worth.

The miracle is that matter is so hard:
Falling stars are now more real than fireworks
Though less dangerous than other skyworks
That can come to earth right here in my yard.

It's not a matter, reader, of being right.
Only tell me, which do you prefer:
"The streetlight hangs in the evening like a star"
Or "the star hangs in the evening like a streetlight"?

Oscar Williams

THE ANSWER USUALLY COMES IN WORDS

The answer usually comes in words, but this is a basket,
A man all covered in straw lying deep in the bulrushes,
And Pharaoh's daughter, her face a benign lamp of love,
Shines over him, surrounded by a province like a future.

The adult is fully armed, though embalmed in the sleep
Of his senses, the latest newborn feeding at the instant;
The servants must ask no questions, the king never know,
A new source has fallen on the grounds of our problems.

Come, are you strong enough to walk, to talk, to climb
The giant beanstalk shining now with new manufacture?
A gulf with mossy sides is the pride of our public park,
Faraway snow covers the pavements that run to horizons.

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Pharaoh's soldiery is playing checkers in the glass-gold
Greenhouses, and Pharaoh's daughter is wearing drugged bees
In her hair, and honey flows like a river beside the taxes,
The whole world will wait until you die ere it buries you.

Get up and out, my man, the day is bursting with moments,
The attendants have kitchens stored up in the distance,
The river weaves in among the bulrushes its minnows of music
To charm the fount of halfsouls gathering within you.

Ah, Pharaoh's soft daughter walks like a pair of seraphs
Topped by the bounty of her face, a nosegay of dazzles,
She shall lead you by the hand to the waterfall's wall,
Into her chamber of twilight papered with real birds—

Into her secret chamber where her emotions like birds
Shall fly around her probable heart in a ring of parables,
You shall pick from her halo a favored one with your finger,
And two birds will fly straight into your eyes to find you.

Rise from the basket in the bulrushes for time is shining
Like a kingdom with lights, and in time you shall be king,
Your love wear the northern lights' ceremony like a crown;
Rise my good man, from your bed of straws in the wind.

Oscar Williams

THE MIRAGE

I lived a life without love, and saw the being
I loved on every branch; then that bare tree
Stood up with all its branches up, a great harp
Growing straight out of the ground, and there I saw
A squadron of bright birds clothing the bare limbs;
The music notes sat on the harp; it was all love.

This was the heart inside the starved body,
Love grew images like cactus, and planted roses
On the walls of the mirage, and the garden grew
Shining with perfume and the senses dwindled to dew,

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The century was rolled into one formation aloft,
A cloud, like St. Veronica's handkerchief of love.

There I saw the face of the one without whom
I lived, two soft jewels implanted in her face,
Her hair pouring around her face without sound,
And her love for me sprang on her skin like dew,
Pearl-grey as the flower of the brain she lay
Quivering on the soft cushion of the great day.

I heard a roar of buildings at my conscience,
I looked up and saw a wall of windows glowing,
And there my love leaned out of each window,
There she leaned out multiplied like heaven
In that vast wall of lights, every light her face,
Suns of a thousand mornings ranging on one day.

And all the machines were running, and yes, great
Was the sound of their running downward and down
Into the blind chutes of their rooted feet,
And all of the windows quivered with my many loves,
Like apples they fell off at one windfall, all,
And I awoke on the starved pavements of no love.

E. L. Mayo

IN THE TUNNEL

I knew I should be here
Oh long ago
I saw myself sitting here, scribbling here
Ten years ago,
But when I get up and leave this tunnel
I do not know where I shall go.

Thunder and spark,
Whistle cleaving the night,
Glittering procession of light;
Then doubly
Dark.

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Without the occasional sound
Of wheels going round,
Of trains going through,
Whistle, and bell,
I should not know where we were;
I should not know;
I should sleep too well.

But here by sad commuters compassed round
In the long tunnel,
In blown foul air, waiting the quickening sound
Of wheels going round, I have seen

Soiled paper, torn
Newspaper softly blown
Down the long tunnel, I have known
The vision of crumpled paper and cannot go home.

Dylan Thomas

BALLAD OF THE LONG-LEGGED BAIT

The bows glided down, and the coast
Blackened with birds took a last look
At his thrashing hair and whale-blue eye;
The trodden town rang its cobbles for luck.

Then goodbye to the fishermanned
Boat with its anchor free and fast
As a bird hooking over the sea,
High and dry by the top of the mast,

Whispered the affectionate sand
And the bulwarks of the dazzled quay.
For my sake sail, and never look back,
Said the looking land.

Sails drank the wind, and white as milk
He sped into the drinking dark;
The sun shipwrecked west on a pearl
And the moon swam out of its hulk,

Funnels and masts went by in a whirl.
Goodbye to the man on the sea-legged deck
To the gold gut that sings on his reel
To the bait that stalked out of the sack,

For we saw him throw to the swift flood
A girl alive with his hooks through her lips:
All the fishs were rayed in blood,
Said the dwindling ships.

Goodbye to chimneys and funnels,
Old wives that spin in the smoke,
He was blind to the eyes of candles
In the praying windows of waves

But heard his bait buck in the wake
And tussle in a shoal of loves.
Now cast down your rod, for the whole
Of the sea is hilly with whales,

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She longs among horses and angels,
The rainbow-fish bend in her joys,
Floated the lost cathedral
Chimes of the rocked buoys.

Where the anchor rode like a gull
Miles over the moonstruck boat
A squall of birds bellowed and fell,
A cloud blew the rain from its throat;

He saw the storm smoke out to kill
With fuming bows and ram of ice,
Fire on starlight, rake Jesu's stream;
And nothing shone on the water's face

But the oil and bubble of the moon,
Plunging and piercing in his course
The lured fish under the foam
Witnessed with a kiss.

Whales in the wake like capes and Alps
Quaked the sick sea and snouted deep,
Deep the great bushed bait with raining lips
Slipped the fins of those humpbacked tons

And fled their love in a weaving dip.
Oh, Jericho was falling in their lungs!
She nipped and dived in the nick of love,
Spun on a spout like a long-legged ball

Till every beast blared down in a swerve
Till every turtle crushed from his shell
Till every bone in the scuttled grave
Rose and crowed and fell!

Good luck to the hand on the rod,
There is thunder under its thumbs;
Gold gut is a lightning thread,
His fiery reel sings off its flames,

The whirled boat in the burn of his blood
Is crying from nets to knives,
Oh the shearwater birds and their boatsized brood
Oh the bulls of Biscay and their calves

Are making under the green, laid veil
The long-legged beautiful bait their wives.
Break the black news and paint on a sail
Huge weddings in the waves,

Over the wakeward-flashing spray
Over the gardens of the floor
Clash out the mounting dolphin's day,
My mast is a bell-spire,

Strike and smoothe, for my decks are drums,
Sing through the water-spoken prow
The octopus walking into her limbs
The polar eagle with his tread of snow.

From salt-lipped beak to the kick of the stern
Sing how the seal has kissed her dead!
The long, laid minute's bride drifts on
Old in her cruel bed.

Over the graveyard in the water
Mountains and galleries beneath
Nightingale and hyena
Rejoicing for that drifting death

Sing and howl through sand and anemone
Valley and sahara in a shell,
Oh all the wanting flesh his enemy
Thrown to the sea in the shell of a girl

Is old as water and plain as an eel;
Always goodbye to the long-legged bread
Scattered in the paths of his heels
For the salty birds fluttered and fed

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And the tall grains foamed in their bills;
Always goodbye to the fires of the face,
For the crab-backed dead on the sea-bed rose
And scuttled over her eyes,

The blind, clawed stare is cold as sleet.
The tempter under the eyelid
Who shows to the selves asleep
Mast-high moon-white women naked

Walking in wishes and lovely for shame
Is dumb and gone with his flame of brides.
Susannah's drowned in the bearded stream
And no-one stirs at Sheba's side

But the hungry kings of the tides;
Sin who had a woman's shape
Sleeps till Silence blows on a cloud
And all the lifted waters walk and leap.

Lucifer that bird's dropping
Out of the sides of the north
Has melted away and is lost
Is always lost in her vaulted breath,

Venus lies star-struck in her wound
And the sensual ruins make
Seasons over the liquid world,
White springs in the dark.

Always goodbye, cried the voices through the shell,
Goodbye always for the flesh is cast
And the fisherman winds his reel
With no more desire than a ghost.

Always good luck, praised the finned in the feather
Bird after dark and the laughing fish
As the sails drank up the hail of thunder
And the long-tailed lightning lit his catch.

The boat swims into the six-year weather,
A wind throws a shadow and it freezes fast.
See what the gold gut drags from under
Mountains and galleries to the crest!

See what clings to hair and skull
As the boat skims on with drinking wings!
The statues of great rain stand still,
And the flakes fall like hills.

Sing and strike his heavy haul
Toppling up the boatside in a snow *of light!*
His decks are drenched with miracles.
Oh miracle of fishes! the long dead bite!

Out of the urn the size of a man,
Out of the room the weight of his trouble
Out of the house that holds a town
In the continent of a fossil

One by one in dust and shawl,
Dry as echoes and insect-faced,
His fathers cling to the hand of the girl
And the dead hand leads the past,

Leads them as children and as air
On to the blindly tossing tops;
The centuries throw back their hair
And the old men sing from newborn lips:

Time is bearing another son.
Kill Time! She turns in her pain!
The oak is felled in the acorn
And the hawk in the egg kills the wren.

He who blew the great fire in
And died on a hiss of flames
Or walked on the earth in the evening
Counting the denials of the grains

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Clings to her drifting hair, and climbs;
And he who taught their lips to sing
Weeps like the risen sun among
The liquid choirs of his tribes.

The rod bends low, divining land,
And through the sundered water crawls
A garden holding to her hand
With birds and animals

With men and women and waterfalls
Trees cool and dry in the whirlpool of ships
And stunned and still on the green, laid veil
Sand with legends in its virgin laps

And prophets loud on the burned dunes;
Insects and valleys hold her thighs hard,
Times and places grip her breast bone,
She is breaking with seasons and clouds;

Round her trailed wrist fresh water weaves,
With moving fish and rounded stones
Up and down the greater waves
A separate river breathes and runs;

Strike and sing his catch of fields
For the surge is sown with barley,
The cattle graze on the covered foam,
The hills have footed the waves away,

With wild sea fillies and soaking bridles
With salty colts and gales in their limbs
All the horses of his haul of miracles
Gallop through the arched, green farms,

Trot and gallop with gulls upon them
And thunderbolts in their manes.
O Rome and Sodom Tomorrow and London
The country tide is cobbled with towns,

And steeples pierce the cloud on her shoulder
And the streets that the fisherman combed
When his long-legged flesh was a wind on fire
And his loin was a hunting flame

Coil from the thoroughfares of her hair
And terribly lead him home alive
Lead her prodigal home to his terror,
The furious ox-killing house of love.

Down, down, down, under the ground,
Under the floating villages,
Turns the moon-chained and water-wound
Metropolis of fishes.

There is nothing left of the sea but its sound,
Under the earth the loud sea walks,
In deathbeds of orchards the boat dies down
And the bait is drowned among hayricks,

Land, land, land, nothing remains
Of the pacing, famous sea but its speech,
And into its talkative seven tombs
The anchor dives through the floors of a church.

Goodbye, good luck, struck the sun and the moon,
To the fisherman lost on the land.
He stands alone at the door of his home,
With his long-legged heart in his hand.

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The Shape of the Screen and The Darkness of the Theatre

Paul Goodman

IN A CONTROVERSY some ten years ago on the best shape for the cinema screen—the occasion was the abortive introduction of the *Grandeur screen*—Sergei Eisenstein contended for the Square as against the Flat Oblong (5:3, 8:5, etc.) His interest was to give the director more latitude for "vertical compositions." In practice, as it turned out, he lost the argument, for altho a few theatres have square screens, all film-frames remain oblong. Partly to explain this outcome, so far as it can be done on merely psychological and esthetic grounds, I should like to discuss the Screen-shape in a more fundamental context than was at that time proposed.*

For the sake of thoroness, perhaps I can first add a few notes to the old discussion. Eisenstein summed up the arguments for the oblong under three heads, which he then refuted: theatre-structure, physiology, and esthetics. 1. The overhung balcony requires a screen lower than the square in order not to interfere with the line of sight of the rear seats; but the new theatres, argued Eisenstein, could dispense with such balconies (which were indeed invented for audition without amplification, for reasons of rent, etc.) But other architectural considerations must also be kept in mind which militate against the Square, namely the pitch of the seats to insure a good direct line of vision, and the avoidance of obstruction from the heads in front. 2. More crucial are the physiological arguments: that the field of stationary vision is broader than it is high and that the moving eyes cover a wider angle horizontally than vertically. It seems to me that these are refuted too cavalierly by the great Russian when he says that the head itself can be moved; for it is all very well to look up and down at a painting, but for the ninety-minute-long attention to a movie, every cause of strain or effort must be absolutely minimized before any other considera-

*Quite apart from this entire discussion, I should say that a sufficient explanation is the physiological one that the *field of vision* is broader than it is high, so that the flat oblong presents a larger easily visible area than the square.

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tion. 3. Thirdly, the esthetic arguments are twofold: that the majority of paintings are oblongs, and that the oblong (e.g. the golden rectangle) is demanded by dynamic symmetry. Let us pass over Eisenstein's remarks on the mysteries of dynamic symmetry. As to the other point, first he denies the statistics, then goes on to say that it was not the influence of painting that made the screen oblong, but of the stage-opening. But cinema must cease to copy the stage (this was of course just at the commencement of the calamitous retrogression of the talkies). Whereas the stage must be an oblong because human action spreads out horizontally, since men don't fly, the cinema, he argues, is not restricted to action in this sense. These points are capital and certainly true; but the question must still be asked whether there is not a basic affinity between the stage and most cinema as spectacle as well as action. The entire question of how the screen is and is not like the stage-opening, and again, the relation of the screen-frame to a picture-frame, is just what I want to go into more fundamentally.

1. The Illusion of the Total Field

Reverting to the physiological fact of the field of vision: since this field is a kind of broad ellipse flattened at the top and bottom, the question must first arise why the screen, or again the picture-frame or the stage-opening, is not elliptical rather than square or oblong.

Now of course the scene, whether in cinema, drama, or painting does not fill the whole field of vision, but only the center of attention. The scene is not identical with our spatial reality, but is an object *in* the space, which also contains the walls, other spectators, etc.; and there is no doubt that the restriction of the audience to psychological participation in the scene rather than overt participation, and to a kind of psychological participation rather than the total psychological participation of dreams, depends on the persistent sense of this spatial discontinuity.

At the same time the scene is not a *mere* object in our vision, as a man or a chair might be an object, for the scene is (in most cases) an *imitation of the whole visible field.* If this were not so, we could not project ourselves into its world without asking ourselves, What other objects are there *alongside* the scene? and such a question would be destructive of dramatic illusion and the self-

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containedness of the spectacle. That is, *the illusion, the self-containedness of the spectacle, and the discontinuity of the scene-reality with the physical reality are mutually involved;* and an artist bent on *avoiding* one of these, must also do something about the others.

The original ellipse of the physical total field to be imitated, therefore, must always bear some influence on the shape of the screen or frame. The *degree* of this influence, however, will be great where the real space and the action of the actors in it is a major object of imitation—the case in most landscapes or in presenting the world of the drama; but the degree will be less where a more particular *body* is the major object, as in the portrait of a man or in the recitation of a soliloquy. There are thus three cases: On the one extreme, where total and even overt participation of the audience is required, as in the "audience-participation theatre," the ellipse broadens out to become identical with the physical space; there is no frame or proscenium. On the other extreme, where the attention is to be centered on a particular object in itself, the ellipse is irrelevant. In the middle, where the illusion of a world is required, there is a frame and it is elliptical.

But why the flat oblong then (as nearer than the square to the ellipse) rather than the ellipse itself?

In the second place, granting that in a given case the illusion of the total field is the effect aimed at, nevertheless the visible arts in general exploit *interesting objects as their most immediate presentation.* These are for the most part men, animals, trees, buildings, all seen with relation to the horizon and the foreground, that is in a system of verticals and horizontals. A composition whose members have no rectilinear relations—e.g. a group of shapes by Miró—at once seems to be in the vacant sky or in the depths of the sea; and such a picture often seems more "real," to hang together better, in an irregular oval frame. But to the degree that the horizon-line and its system of perspective belongs to the objects of interest, and these objects are the immediate presentation, the scene as a whole will come under a rectilinear influence; the frame correspondingly—for in the end the function of the frame is to confirm the spatial system of the scene—will be square, vertical oblong (as in the portrait of a man standing), or flat oblong.

If we would then require the *combined* effects of illusion of

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the total field and immediate presentation of terrestrial objects, perhaps the flat oblong is the most serviceable simple shape. Given a single problem, a peculiarly appropriate shape is always most expressive, for instance a little upright oval for a miniature of a face; but the movie-screen, we must remember, is the common-denominator of an indefinite number of usual problems. For a very special effect we may work *within* the common-denominator, for instance mask the screen to isolate a figure or iris down to a detail.

2. The Square and Synthetic Montage

When I speak of the "illusion of the total field," I do not mean that the scene-space must be illusory in the sense of reproducing the very same spatial properties of the physical space. For instance the scene may have different laws of perspective, as in many Chinese paintings, or be the space appropriate to phantastic space-time juxtapositions quite different from the world we are used to seeing. And in all painting, in abstract painting especially, the illusory space tends to become two-dimensional and none other than the space of the canvas itself.

Nevertheless, all these *scenic* arts, which begin from the real space and either reproduce it relatively unmodified (the case where the frame is like a window), or distort it to create effects of unreality (as in *Caligari* or the paintings of Chirico), or abstract it to the two-dimensional conditions of the canvas,—all these are to be distinguished from those arts which from the outset disregard the existence of a persistent space and *construct* objects and designs without determining their space at all. Léger's *Ballet Mécanique* is of this sort and the so-called non-objective paintings like Kandinsky's (as opposed to abstract paintings). And to understand Eisenstein, I think it is in this direction that we must look.

Consider the following series of effects in cinema: Scenes of cinema often achieve the pictorial, e.g. much of Murnau's *Sunrise* is Dutch landscape or chiaroscuro interior, and the poses in Dovzhenko's films are certainly portraits. In such cases the screen-shape is not unlike the corresponding picture-frame, and it has the pictorial function of bounding the determined space, guilding the eye back into the composition, and completing the static whole. (By "static" here I do not exclude motion across the scene but only the

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movement of cutting from scene to scene.) Such active preoccupation with a single shot as a completed whole, however, tends to destroy the temporal flow of the *sequence* of scenes, and is therefore eschewed in most cinema, for instance in any ordinary story-telling film. Here the screen-shape is looked *thru* rather than looked *at;* it offers the means for looking out, so to speak, at the world behind; that is, it acts purely as a window. But now supposing no illusion of the total world is desired at all: then the screen-shape may simply be disregarded as a part of the spectacle, and the compostion may be formed of objects succeeding each other as if in an indeterminate space or even in no space. This effect, most obvious in the light-play films, sometimes moves so far from the conditions of ordinary vision as to be analogous to music, cf. the efforts of Scriabin or such imbecilities as *Anitra's Dance.* But if the presentation is not to be mere play of lights, but objects determined by an horizon, then the Square shape might be just the most suitable space, for, as Eisenstein insists, it allows the greatest quantity of expansion in the relevant directions; as a rectangle, it supports the design of each shot of objects; as *not* an ellipse or flat oblong, it neutralizes the sense of an actual visible space. Now any one who has admired the marvelous synthetic montage of this director, which is not the turning of a scene before the camera (illusion of the actual total field), nor yet the posing of a static composition (picture-frame), but a unity of cutting and synthesizing a sequence of images of objects by means of their psychological and philosophical associations, will easily understand why Eisenstein asks for the Square. *The square is the convenient screen for synthetic montage.*

The square neutralizes not only the illusion of the actual visible world, but also the sense of visible spectacle altogether, for it does not play to the visual potentialities of the spectator, but retracts from the largest area that he could conveniently rest his eyes in. This leaves the way open to the *non-visual* play of attention, unconscious, visceral, and theoretic, that Eisenstein so much delights in exploiting. He does not speak to the sight. It is then in this double sense, first as getting away from the limitations of physical visible reality and secondly from the sentiment of spectacle altogether, that Eisenstein says the cinema must not copy the stage. But expressionist staging tries at the same freedom—

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let me mention the expressionist dictum that "vertical motion is more interesting than horizontal," so that actors somewhat "fly" after all.

We now ask, however, How are the *sequences*, whether of pictorial images, synthetic montages, or dramatic episodes, organized into the ninety-minute-long film? In answering this, we shall again have to return to the relation of the screen and the stage-opening in a more fundamental way. But let me first indicate another possibility.

The *ideal* for Eisenstein would no doubt be that the whole should be one vast synthetic montage of parts of synthetic montage. This result is even somewhat achieved in *Old and New*, where the overall changes of tone and rhythm is a direct expression of the general theme, while the narrative is reduced almost to a story-framework for the montage. But certainly for the most part in Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Trauberg, or any of the others, the organization of the sequences of montage is not itself montage but either narrative or drama. As such, it draws again on the illusion of a whole visible world. Do not misunderstand me: the narrative and drama may themselves be symbolic and not the chief expression, which may be an idea; but the point is that this idea is not presented directly by the montage, but indirectly thru the narrative and drama, with their sense of a self-contained illusory world.

3. Some Kinds of Stage

Let us now broaden our scope from the screen or stage-opening itself to the more inclusive whole of the scene-opening in the theatre, with its conditions of light or darkness, silence or music, and other spectators. My contention is that the flat oblong screen and the ordinary dark cinema-theatre are conditions for the same kind of illusion. But I can analyze this out better first in terms of some kinds of stage.

The argument against the peep-hole or absent-fourth-wall stage has generally been wrongly proposed as an absolute rejection, but the correct formulation should be: The peep-hole has an expression incompatible with the theme or attitude that we now wish to express; or again, the peep-hole produces a psychological state in the audience that makes impossible such and such a communication; or again, putting it formally, such and such a stage

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and theatre-conditions are good for such and such a plot or probable sequence.

Consider some properties of the peep-hole theatre. The house-lights are dimmed, the audience is silent. Not only are the stage-lights always brighter, but they belong to an independent system of lighting and they illumine an independent space. The stage-space is made distinct from the audience-space in other ways also: is raised above it, framed in a proscenium, etc. Further, the sense of an absent fourth wall gives the stage-incidents an independent time and causality, for the stage-events can no wise act on or be reacted on by the physical audience. But since the dimly-lit and silent audience has no life of its own, its entire activity must consist in mental projection into the stage-world. There, of course, it has the liveliest interests, interests which are indeed intimately personal to each member of the audience; but these interests assert themselves and are gratified under the conditions of phantastic projection. In short, we might say the following: (1) The peep-hole stage expresses an illusion of the total visual field. (2) It keeps the audience all eyes. (3) The probability of the plot on such a stage seems to be given entirely thru the actors, who are self-subsistent and on their own, for there is no other continuous reality. (3) The scenery must also add up to a self-subsistent reality, tho of course it need not be realistic; but bare stage-boards in the manner of Orson Welles' *Julius Caesar* will not do. (4) The audience-interest is given under the psychological conditions of projection, as in day-dreams.

Now contrast such a stage with a daylight performance (of, say, a masque) on a lawn or in an amphitheatre. Here there is a continuity between the visible audience and the stage and actors; and this might express, depending on the ethical tone of the plot and the occasion, the sense that the actors are amateurish neighbors, subject to running comment; or that they are heroic surrogates of the audience, perhaps in a religious act like the mass; or that the play is a mere spectacle or pageant, an interesting object *alongside* the other sights in the total field of vision. The unity of the whole, we must then say, is partly given by the audience's sense of its relation to the play. (I do not mean this to be a description of the Greek theatre, where the Chorus *both* unified and divided the play and the public.)

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Consider, again, the Elizabethan stage with much of its action on the apron;—I am speaking more of the stage of Marlowe than of Shakespeare, and more of the chronicle-plays than of the tragedies. Suppose on this stage the poet violates the unities of space and time at will, brings forth his speakers on the apron or on the inner-stage as suits his purpose, etc. Such a stage makes more indirect the illusion of a presented world, it introduces effects of narration into the drama. (At the same time there is still the illusion of a world, tho with indefinite geography and perspective.) Psychologically, there is a more direct communication between the poet and the audience; the unity is partly in the poet's interventions and juxtapositions, whether for rhetorical or lyrical effect, or reportage, or to tell a story. Here elaborate asides to the audience and topical jokes do not seem out of place. It is interesting to observe how the conventions of the Living Newspaper, like vaudeville before it, have tried to adapt the architecture of the peep-hole stage to the direct communication of the Elizabethan platform.

The expressionists, as I have mentioned, sometimes neutralize the sense of an (imitated) physical world entirely. The revolving stage, the spiral stairs that rise from the flat on which men ordinarily converse, the timeless masks and costumes—these all speak in terms of theory or inner perceptions; there is still a self-contained visual pattern and therefore the imitation of a total field, but the pattern is more abstract and indeed tends to spread out to include the architecture of the theatre itself, which is preferably styled according to the same canons.

Quite another effect, again, is that of the audience-participation theatre, for here not only are the play and the public physically and psychologically continuous, but—in the ideal case—the overt reactions of the audience ought to alter the events of the play. Strictly speaking, this is not a "theatre" at all. Here we enter the realms of political meetings, religious revivals, and parlor conversations; and have come a long way from the hush, the three knocks, and the footlights lit, before the curtain rises.

I have introduced these few remarks only to demonstrate that the flat oblong of the peep-hole stage is by no means due merely to the fact that human-beings do not fly, but especially to the fact that its peculiar properties, which are not the properties of the

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Stage in general, strongly call for imitation of the total field and illusion of the physical space.

4. The Darkness of the Theatre

The movie-theatre is darkest of all. The movie audience consists preeminently of *individuals in isolation.* And the *discontinuity* between the audience-space and the space of the scenes is of course absolute. If the effect of the brightly lit stage is a controlled phantasy, the flickering lights of the screen working on the ninety--minute attention unrelieved by intermissions produce what is nearer to hypnosis (where it is not perfect sleep). Certainly, especially in a small theatre, the stage is warmer and more intimate in appeal than the screen, so long as the phantasy is more nearly like what we are used to or consciously desire; the actors are flesh, the shadows are only shadows. But let the cinematic attention become fascinated, as it does as the minutes flow by, and these huge shadows press in closer to the mind at this deeper level than the sight of real flesh can penetrate. The disjoined and composite space created by cutting from scene to scene is more like the space of dreams than the quiet stage can hope to imitate.

These circumstances explain easily enough why cinema has devoted itself almost exclusively to the excitement of ordinarily repressed feelings and even unconscious connections; and why, tho clearly visible and therefore more patently absurd than literary phantasies, its world of desire is not immediately rejected. Adding the mass-production and the enormous audience, we have the principle of selection of these feelings, and we understand the usual plot, the star-system, the surrealist interiors, etc. Indeed, the real difficulty is to see why the movies have not more directly imitated the actual technique and contents of dreams—consider, e.g., the extraordinary compulsion of *Le Sang d'un Poète,* where this is done. But the reason for this abstention may well be audience fear and modesty, which are even stronger than audience desire. To put this another way: the *public* moving-picture that the audience talks about after the performance, or reads about before it in the reviews, is not the same as the actual experience of the solitary spectator; but this actual experience is hinted at in the advertising.

How far this tepid bath is from the intellectual synthetic mon-

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tage of Eisenstein! His constructions are passionate and rich with dream-symbolism to be sure, but like other artists he gives these in effortful stabs to a *disturbing* depth, at which the audience cannot rest.

It would be further still from a "film of political participation," whatever such a thing might be.

The hypnotic absorption, again, was immensely aided by the continuous and not independently interesting musical accompaniment of the old films. This music neutralized the audience noises, lulled the muscle-jitters, and restricted the only possible field of sensuous interest to the eyes. Its continuity provided just the matrix needed for the scene-space, to keep it one despite the often kaleidoscopic cutting; when the music stopped, the mechanism at once became apparent. But this subject, and the question of the various possible relations of the speech and the music, is very intricate and must be studied independently. It seems to me that the talk in the American films is somewhat destructive of the illusion, it is too loud and lifelike; contrast it with the whispering and mumbling often affected by the French (originally because of imperfect technique).

The fact that both the peep-hole stage and the movie-screen imitate the total world in conditions of phantasy is a chief cause, it seems to me, of the remarkable phenomenon of audience-interest in the personalities of the actors themselves, a phenomenon not apparent with respect to other arts and spectacles, even musical performances or oratory. The conception of "Hollywood" is of course pat for this argument: here is a distant and paradisal world inhabited completely by the beings of the world of phantasy, but come to "life." And the machinery of Hollywood publicity is designed precisely to controlling that life so as not to jar with the properties of the other world.

Let me make still another sociological observation, a point of the highest importance, but almost completely disregarded by the critics of stage and screen. I have mentioned the "drama of political participation." Now certainly the most determined essays in both stage and cinema have been made towards direct rhetorical appeal, for ends both high and low. By "direct rhetorical appeal" I mean both the rousing of feeling and the presentation of arguments, especally by dramatic example, for or against something

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with the end of producing appropriate overt action on the part of the audience. But first: is it the fact that the excitement roused in the theatrical condition of phantasy can bridge the discontinuity and survive in the public world? might not the *contrary* be partly true: that the energy attached to such theatrical symbols is thereby fixed at that level, permanently submerged beneath the political level? (This is the old story of the women who exhaust their unction of benevolence in the esthetic splendor and sexuality of religious ceremonials.) Secondly: is it likely that the desired reactions, whether of horror or enthusiasm, when fixed in the phantastic world, reappear in the public world with the same positive or negative value? Perhaps with even the opposite value! as a child frightened by a gangster film or by images of the horrors of war may retain, when he "awakes," the sentiment of a forbidden thrill. Certainly the American public, presented with the usual images of filmic luxury (still, in 1941, in the style of the Paris Exposition of 1925), does not react with either emulation or resentment, but rather with a dreamy delight in these *ideals*, which exist in the mental world somewhere near the ideals of honor and divinity. What then? Am I arguing that these arts can not or ought not to aim at rhetorical ends? Certinly not; but that from such rhetorical calculations we must not omit a dimension which may turn out to be absolutely vital. A necessary safeguard is the analysis of the expressive medium.

5. Conclusion

To sum up: I have tried to distinguish between artistic imitations of the seen world as a whole, discontinuous from the self-conscious spectator, and seeming to exhaust the field of vision, and those other imitations which are merely part of the total field and preserve a certain continuity between the object and the spectator. I have touched on a few differences of the two types in plot and psychological appeal. I have argued that the flat oblong of the screen was not taken over from the stage merely by an historical influence, but that there is a common cause in the medium of expression of both. And I have tried partly to explain—the chief explanation, I would maintain, is physiological—the almost universal success of the flat oblong by the somewhat simplist formula that it is a compromise between the imitation of the total field of

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vision and the rectilinearity with which we compose the terrestrial objects within the frame.

Again, what then? The conclusion of this line of argument is by no means that cinema can not or ought not aim at effects of synthetic construction, or participation, or anything except spatial illusion;—God forbid that a critic should argue for the status quo, and what a status quo! Rather, that such non-illusory effects require the invention of new technical resources and manners of handling, the work of creative directors. We have seen, for instance, how Eisenstein's Square is one such invention, more far-reaching in its expression than one might have thought, intimately related to the achievement of a non-illusory effect. An invention along another line is Herr Gropius' "Space Theatre," a plan to project films simultaneously on several different screens. The exact expressiveness of such a medium would have to be discovered by exploration, but it seems to me—on the analogy especially of the Grandeur screen—that at least an effect of pageantry could be directly achieved by this means, for the several spaces would destroy the illusion of the unique illusory space, restore the relation of the spectator to the spectacle as spectacle, and give the spectacle great magnitude. Another technique for overcoming illusion—but one which seems to me to sink even *deeper* into illusion—is the employment of news-reels or news-reel atmosphere in documentaries. Another, thrice-familiar, technique is the direct address to the audience by a huge close-up of a face—but almost always this particular sequence in the film merely clashes with everything that has gone before; let me give no examples.

CONTRIBUTORS

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London Letter

London, England
Jan. 1, 1942

Dear Editors:

At this moment nothing is happening politically in England, and since we probably have ahead of us a long exhausting war in which morale will be all-important, I want to use most of this letter in discussing certain currents of thought which are moving to and fro just under the surface. Some of the tendencies I mention may seem to matter very little at present, but they do I think tell one something about possible future developments.

1. Whom Are We Fighting Against?

This question, which obviously had to be answered sooner or later, began to agitate the big public some time in 1941, following on Vansittart's pamphlets and the starting of a German daily paper for the refugees (*Die Zeitung*, mildly Left, circulation about 60,000). Vansittart's thesis is that the Germans are *all* wicked, and not merely the Nazis. I don't need to tell you how gleefully the blimps have seized upon this as a way of escaping from the notion that we are fighting against Fascism. But of late the "only good German is a dead one" line has taken the rather sinister form of a fresh drive against the refugees. The Austrian monarchists have fallen foul of the German leftwingers, whom they accuse of being pan-Germans in disguise, and this delights the blimps, who are always trying to manœuvre their two enemies, Germany and Socialism, into the same place. The point has now been reached where anyone who describes himself as "anti-Fascist" is suspected of being pro-German. But the question is much complicated by the fact that the blimps have a certain amount of right on their side. Vansittart, badly though he writes, is an able man with more background than most of his opponents, and he has insisted on two facts which the pinks have done their best to obscure. One is that much of the Nazi philosophy is not new but is merely a continuation of pan-Germanism, and the other is that Britain cannot have a European policy without having an army. The pinks cannot admit that the German masses are behind Hitler any more than the blimps can admit that their class must be levered out of control if we are to win the war. The controversy has raged for four months or more in the correspondence columns of several papers, and one paper in particular is obviously keeping it going as a way of baiting the refugees and the "reds" generally. No one, however, airs any racial theories about Germany, which is a great advance on the war propaganda of 1914-18.

Ordinary working people do not seem either to hate the Germans or to distinguish between Germans and Nazis. Here and there there was violent anti-German feeling at the time of the bad air-raids, but it has worn off. The term "Hun" has not caught on with the working classes this

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time. They call the Germans Jerries, which may have a mildly obscene meaning but is not unfriendly. All the blame for everything is placed on Hitler, even more than on the Kaiser during the last war. After an air raid one often used to hear people say "He was over again last night"—"he" being Hitler. The Italians are generally called Eyeties, which is less offensive than Wops, and there is no popular feeling against them whatever, nor against the Japanese as yet. To judge from photos in the newspapers, the land girls are quite ready to get off with Italian prisoners working on the farms. As to the smaller nations who are supposed to be at war with us, no one remembers which is which. The women who a year ago were busy knitting stockings for the Finns are now busy knitting them for the Russians, but there is no ill feeling. The chief impression one derives from all this chaos of opinions is how little the lack of a positive war aim, or even of any definite mental picture of the enemy, matters to people who are at any rate at one in not wanting to be governed by foreigners.

2. *Our Allies.*

Whatever may be happening among the higher-ups, the effect of the Russian alliance has been a tremendous net increase of pro-Russian sentiment. It is impossible to discuss the war with ordinary working-class and middle-class people without being struck by this. But the enthusiasm that ordinary people feel for Russia is not coupled with the faintest interest in the Russian political system. All that has happened is that Russia has become respectable. An enormous hammer and sickle flag flies daily over Selfridge's, the biggest shop in London. The Communists have not caused so much friction as I expected. They have been tactful in their posters and public pronouncements, and have gone to unheard-of lengths in supporting Churchill. But though they may have gained in numbers as a result of the Russian alliance, they do not seem to have gained in political influence. To a surprising extent ordinary people fail to grasp that there is any connection between Moscow and the Communist party, or even that Communist policy has changed as a result of Russia's entry into the war. Everyone is delighted that the Germans have failed to take Moscow, but no one sees in this any reason for paying any attention to what Palme Dutt and Co. may say. In practice this attitude is sensible, but at the bottom of it there lies a profound lack of interest in doctrinaire politics. The ban has not been taken off the *Daily Worker*. Immediately after it was suppressed it reappeared as a factory sheet which was illegally printed, but was winked at. Now, under the title of "the *British Worker*," it is sold on the streets without interference. But it has ceased to be a daily and has lost most of its circulation. In the more important parts of the press the Communist influence has not been regained.

There is no corresponding increase in pro-American sentiment—the contrary, if anything. It is true that the entry of Japan and America into the war was expected by everyone, whereas the German invasion of Russia

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came as a surprise. But our new alliance has simply brought out the immense amount of anti-American feeling that exists in the ordinary low-brow middle class. English cultural feelings towards America are complicated but can be defined fairly accurately. In the middle class, the people who are *not* anti-American are the declassed technician type (people like radio engineers) and the younger intelligentsia. Up till about 1930 nearly all "cultivated" people loathed the U.S.A., which was regarded as the vulgariser of England and Europe. The disappearance of this attitude was probably connected with the fall of Latin and Greek from their dominant position as school subjects. The younger intellectuals have no objection to the American language and tend to have a masochistic attitude towards the U.S.A., which they believe to be richer and more powerful than Britain. Of course it is exactly this that excites the jealousy of the ordinary patriotic middle class. I know people who automatically switch off the radio as soon as any American news comes on, and the most banal English film will always get middle-class support because "it's such a relief to get away from those American voices." Americans are supposed to be boastful, bad-mannered and worshippers of money, and are also suspected of plotting to inherit the British Empire. There is also business jealousy, which is very strong in the trades which have been hit by the Lease-Lend agreement. The working-class attitude is quite different. English working-class people nearly always dislike Americans when in actual contact with them, but they have no preconceived cultural hostility. In the big towns they are being more and more Americanised in speech through the medium of the cinema.

It is uncertain whether English xenophobia is being broken down by the presence in England of large numbers of foreigners. I think it is, but plenty of people disagree with me. There is no doubt that in the summer of 1940 working-class suspicion of foreigners helped to make possible the internment of the refugees. At the time I talked with countless people, and except for Left intellectuals I could find no one who saw anything wrong in it. The blimps were after the refugees because they were largely Socialists, and the working-class line was "what did they want to come here for?" Underlying this, a hangover from an earlier period, was a resentment against these foreigners who were supposedly taking Englishmen's jobs. In the years before the war it was largely Trade Union opposition that prevented a big influx of German Jewish refugees. Of late feelings have grown more friendly, partly because there is no longer a scramble for jobs, but partly also, I think, owing to personal contacts. The foreign troops who are quartered here in large numbers seem to get on unexpectedly well with the population, the Poles in particular being a great success with the girls. On the other hand there is a certain amount of anti-semitism. One is constantly coming on pockets of it, not violent but pronounced enough to be disquieting. The Jews are supposed to dodge military service, to be the worst offenders on the Black Market, etc., etc.

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I have heard this kind of talk even from country people who had probably never seen a Jew in their lives. But no one wants actually to *do* anything to the Jews, and the idea that the Jews are responsible for the war never seems to have caught on with the big public, in spite of the efforts of the German radio.

3. Defeatism and German Propaganda.

Appeasement of the Chamberlain type is not "dead," as the newspapers are constantly assuring us, but is lying very low. But there exists another school of rightwing defeatism which can be conveniently studied in the weekly paper *Truth*. *Truth* has had a curious history and is a distinctly influential paper. At one time it was a non-political factual paper specialising in a genteel form of muckraking (exposure of patent medicine frauds, etc.), and was taken in as a matter of course in every club and regimental mess throughout the Empire. So far as I know it still has the same circulation, but latterly it has taken a definite political and economic line and become a stronghold of the worst kind of rightwing Toryism. Sir Ernest Benn, for instance, writes in it every week. It is not only anti-Labour, but in a discreet way anti-Churchill, anti-Russian and, more markedly, anti-American. It opposed the exchange of naval bases for American destroyers, the only other opposers being the Blackshirts and Communists. The strategy it advocates is to avoid entangling alliances, keep out of Europe and concentrate on self-defence on sea and in the air. The obvious logic of this is to make a compromise peace at the earliest possible moment. The quantity of advertisements for banks and insurance companies which *Truth* contains shows how well it is thought of in those quarters, and recently questions in Parliament brought out the fact that it is partly owned by the Conservative Party machine.

Leftwing defeatism is quite different and much more interesting. One or two of the minor political parties (for instance the British Anarchists, who followed up the German invasion of Russia with a terrific and very able anti-Soviet pamphlet, *The Truth about Russia*) follow a line which by implication is "revolutionary defeatist." The I.L.P. is preaching what amounts to a watered version of the "Ten Propositions" set forth in the *Partisan Review*, but in very indefinite terms, never clearly stating whether or not it "supports" the war. But the really interesting development is the increasing overlap between Fascism and pacifism, both of which overlap to some extent with "left" extremism. The attitude of the very young is more significant than that of the *New Statesman* pinks who war-mongered between 1935 and 1939 and then sulked when the war started. So far as I know, the greater part of the very young intelligentsia are anti-war—this doesn't stop them from serving in the armed forces, of course—don't believe in any "defence of democracy," are inclined to prefer Germany to Britain, and don't feel the horror of Fascism that we who are somewhat older feel. The entry of Russia into the war didn't alter this, though most of these people pay lip-service to Russia. With the out-and-

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out, turn-the-other-cheek pacifists you come upon the much stranger phenomenon of people who have started by renouncing violence ending by championing Hitler. The antisemitic motif is very strong, though usually soft-pedalled in print. But not many English pacifists have the intellectual courage to think their thoughts down to the roots, and since there is no real answer to the charge that pacifism is objectively pro-Fascist, nearly all pacifist literature is forensic—i.e., specialises in avoiding awkward questions. To take one example, during the earlier period of the war the pacifist monthly the *Adelphi,* edited by Middleton Murry, accepted at its face value the German claim to be a "socialist" state fighting against "plutocratic" Britain, and more or less equated Germany with Russia. Hitler's invasion of Russia made nonsense of this line of thought, and in the five or six issues that have followed the *Adelphi* has performed the surprising feat of not mentioning the Russo-German war. The *Adelphi* has once or twice engaged in Jew-baiting of a mild kind. *Peace News,* now also edited by Middleton Murry, follows its old tradition of opposing war for different and incompatible reasons, at one moment because violence is wicked, at another because peace will "preserve the British Empire," etc.

For some years past there has been a tendency for Fascists and currency reformers to write in the same papers, and it is only recently that they have been joined by the pacifists. I have in front of me a copy of the little anti-war paper *Now* which contains contributions from, among others, the Duke of Bedford, Alexander Comfort, Julian Symons and Hugh Ross Williamson. Alexander Comfort is a "pure" pacifist of the other-cheek school. The Duke of Bedford has for years been one of the main props of the Douglas Credit movement, and is also a devout Anglican, a pacifist or near-pacifist, and a landowner upon an enormous scale. In the early months of the war (then Marquis of Tavistock) he went to Dublin on his own initiative and obtained or tried to obtain a draft of peace terms from the German Embassy. Recently he has published pamphlets urging the impossibility of winning the war and describing Hitler as a misunderstood man whose good faith has never really been tested. Julian Symons writes in a vaguely Fascist strain but is also given to quoting Lenin. Hugh Ross Williamson has been mixed up in the Fascist movement for some time, but in the split-off section of it to which William Joyce ("Lord Haw Haw") also belongs. Just before the war he and others formed a fresh Fascist party calling itself the People's Party, of which the Duke of Bedford was a member. The People's Party apparently came to nothing, and in the first period of the war Williamson devoted himself to trying to bring about a get-together between the Communists and Mosley's followers. You see here an example of what I mean by the overlap between Fascism and pacifism.

What is interesting is that every section of anti-war opinion has one section of German radio propaganda, as it were, assigned to it. Since the

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outbreak of war the Germans have done hardly any direct propaganda in England otherwise than by wireless. The best known of their broadcasts, indeed the only ones that can be said to have been listened to to any appreciable extent, are those of William Joyce. No doubt these are often extravagantly untruthful, but they are a more or less responsible type of broadcast, well delivered and giving news rather than straight propaganda. But in addition the Germans maintain four spurious "freedom" stations, actually operating on the continent but pretending to be operating illegally in England. The best known of these is the New British Broadcasting Station, which earlier in the war the Blackshirts used to advertise by means of stickybacks. The general line of these broadcasts is "uncensored news," or "what the Government is hiding from you." They affect a pessimistic, well-informed manner, as of someone who is on the inside of the inside, and go in for enormous figures of shipping losses, etc. They urge the dismissal of Churchill, talk apprehensively about "the Communist danger," and are anti-American. The anti-American strain is even stronger in Joyce's broadcasts. The Americans are swindling us over the Lease Lend agreement, are gradually absorbing the Empire, etc., etc. More interesting than the New British is the Workers' Challenge Station. This goes in for a line of red-hot revolutionary talks under such titles as "Kick Churchill Out," delivered by an authentic British working man who uses plenty of unprintable words. We are to overthrow the corrupt capitalist government which is selling us to the enemy, and set up a real socialist government which will come to the rescue of our heroic comrades of the Red Army and give us victory over Fascism. (This German station does not hesitate to talk about "the menace of Nazism," "the horrors of the Gestapo," etc.) The Workers' Challenge is not overtly defeatist. The line is always that it is probably too late, the Red Army is done for, but that we *may* be able to save ourselves if only we can "overthrow capitalism," which is to be done by means of strikes, mutinies, sabotage in the armament factories, and so forth. The other two "freedom" stations are the Christian Peace Movement (pacifism) and Radio Caledonia (Scottish nationalism).

You can see how each strain of German propaganda corresponds to one existing, or at any rate potential, defeatist faction. Lord Haw Haw and the New British are aimed at the anti-American middle class, roughly speaking the people who read *Truth*, and the business interests that have suffered from the war. The Workers' Challenge is aimed at the Communists and the Left extremists generally. The Christian Peace Movement is aimed at the P.P.U. I don't want to give the impression, however, that German propaganda has much effect at this moment. There is little doubt that it has been an almost complete flop, especially during the last eighteen months. Various things that have happened have suggested that since the outbreak of war the Germans have not been well informed about internal conditions in England, and much of their propaganda, even if listened to, would fail because of simple psychological errors on which anyone with

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a real knowledge of England could put them right. But the various strains of defeatist feeling are there, and at some time they may grow. In some of what I have said above I may have seemed to mention people and factions too insignificant to be worth noticing, but in this bloodstained harlequinade in which we are living one never knows what obscure individual or half-lunatic theory may not become important. I do seem to notice a tendency in intellectuals, especially the younger ones, to come to terms with Fascism, and it is a thing to keep one's eye on. The quisling intellectual is a phenomenon of the last two years. Previously we all used to assume that Fascism was so self-evidently horrible that no thinking person would have anything to do with it, and also that the Fascists always wiped out the intelligentsia when they had the opportunity. Neither assumption was true, as we can see from what happened in France. Both Vichy and the Germans have found it quite easy to keep a facade of "French culture" in existence. Plenty of intellectuals were ready to go over, and the Germans were quite ready to make use of them, even when they were "decadent." At this moment Drieu de la Rochelle is editing the *Nouvelle Revue Francaise,* Pound is bellowing against the Jews on the Rome radio, and Celine is a valued exhibit in Paris, or at least his books are. All of these would come under the heading of kulturbolschewismus, but they are also useful cards to play against the intelligentsia in Britain and the U.S.A. If the Germans got to England, similar things would happen, and I think I could make out at least a preliminary list of the people who would go over.

Not much news here. All is very quiet on the literary front. The paper shortage seems to be favouring the appearance of very short books, which may be all to the good and may possibly bring back the "long-short story," a form which has never had a fair deal in England. I wrongly told you in an earlier letter that Dylan Thomas was in the army. He is physically unfit and is doing jobs for the B.B.C. and the M.O.I. So is nearly everybody that used to be a writer, and most of us rapidly going native.

The food situation is much as before. We had our puddings on Christmas day, but they were a little paler than usual. The tobacco situation has righted itself, but matches are very short. They are watering the beer again, the third time since re-armament. The blackout is gradually relaxing in the absence of air-raids. There are still people sleeping in the Tube stations, but only a handful at each station. The basements of demolished houses have been bricked up and turned into water tanks for use in case of fire. They look just like Roman baths and give the ruins an even more Pompeian look than they had before. The stopping of the air raids has had some queer results. During the worst of the blitz they set in hand huge schemes for levelling waste pieces of ground to make playgrounds, using bomb debris as a subsoil. All these have had to stop in the middle, no more bomb debris being available.

All the best. Yours ever

GEORGE ORWELL

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Books

THE MOSCOW TRIALS, 1942 VERSION

LIKE LADY MACBETH'S BLOODSTAINS, the Moscow Trials are an inexpugnable moral stain which no amount of washing seems to affect. To judge by the repeated efforts that have been made to alter the widely unfavorable public opinion on the Trials and their attendant massacres, one might think that the perpetrators—and their acolytes—had uneasy consciences. However, it's really not at all a matter of bad conscience, but simply of political calculation.

The terrible reality of the world war apparently is not enough for these students of history. They also feel they must rake up the Moscow Trials again, as though some new data had appeared on which to base a revision of previous opinion on these pseudo-judicial monstrosities. The pretext is the Nazi-Soviet war and the hasty and superficial deductions drawn from the fact that the U.S.S.R., with a population more than double that of Germany and an army in proportion, was not conquered by Hitler as easily as Denmark, Greece or France.

A myth is being created and popularized, skillfully nurtured by the Stalinists and their veteran fellow-travellers, that the relative fighting power of the Red Army is due to the previous extermination of all potential opponents of Stalin, conveniently amalgamated under the generic term, "Fifth Columnists."*

The note was first struck by the Hon. Joseph E. Davies, former American ambassador to the Soviet Union. Speaking in Chicago last June, three days after Hitler's invasion of Russia had begun, Mr. Davies declared: "There were no Fifth Columnists in Russia in 1941—they had shot them. The purge had cleansed the country and rid it of treason." This is to be found, with other observations on the same level, in the anthology entitled *Mission to Moscow.**

This work is a mixed salad composed of official dispatches selected by the author and often edited by him, mingled with extracts from his private journal also chosen and edited by him, and seasoned with topical comments on the intellectual level of an election speech. It goes without saying that we have no guarantee even of the authenticity of the fragments reprinted: a diplomatic publication is always carefully edited for reasons of state, and furthermore in this case the job has been done not by per-

*Every age has its catchwords which relieve us of the painful duty of thinking, and one cannot help wondering how we got along, for so many centuries, without this invaluable term, "Fifth Columnist." But, as Goethe's Mephisto observes, "Where ideas are lacking, words come to the rescue."

**Mission to Moscow.* By Joseph E. Davies. Simon & Schuster. $3.00.

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sonally disinterested officials but by the very individual who hopes to gain intellectual and moral credit from the work. This having been said, let us nevertheless consider this extraordinary work entirely in itself. And let us consider in the same way, without looking too closely behind the scenes, two other current books of similar tendency, those by Anna Louise Strong and Walter Duranty.*

These two books pretend to describe the Soviet Union on the eve of its entry into the war, but are written specifically, like Mr. Davies' work, to whitewash Stalin's crimes, from the Moscow Trials and the purges to the pact with Hitler, the stab in the back of Poland, the aggression against Finland, the extermination of the three small Baltic nations, and other exploits equally devoid of risk and glory.

Mrs. Strong's book is harmless in the sense that it is a resumé of official Stalinist propaganda, recognisable at first glance. The author earnestly recites her well-learned lesson, in a flat, dull and colorless style which would discourage the most sympathetic reader. Mr. Duranty's book, on the other hand, is lively and clever, and if one finds it rather nauseating, it is because of the combination of whimsicality and cynicism with which the author treats the most painful themes, and the sinister jokes he makes, with a remarkable lack of tact, about matters not at all suitable for pleasantries.

For all their agreement on the Trials and the purges, the two authors show some interesting differences, so that one book to some extent refutes the other. Thus Mrs. Strong solemnly recites her lesson about the peasants: "Today the traditional bearded, illiterate, superstitious Russian peasant has practically vanished." The implication is that, thanks to Stalin, the peasants are shaved, educated and enlightened. But here is Mr. Duranty, apparently franker but in reality cynical and no less dishonest: "He [one foreign friend] did not understand the sad but realistic fact that all those who had opposed collective farming in the villages were dead or exiled. . . ." Mr. Duranty doesn't say how many were "dead" (more precisely, executed) or "exiled" (more precisely, condemned to forced labor under conditions so horrible they died like flies). Nor does he mention how many women and children suffered the same fate. Nevertheless, the contrast with Mrs. Strong is striking.

Mr. Duranty's technique is to concede a minimum the better to conceal, in equivocal language, the terrible reality. Mrs. Strong, on the other hand, prefers to avoid all difficult questions and recite unweariedly her little lesson. She speaks quite seriously of "the Stalin policy of non-interference by the Soviet Government in other nations' internal affairs." She informs us that "the foundations of the modern Red Army were laid in 1924-5 by Mikhail Frunze and elaborated after his death by Klimenty Voroshilov." This is the classic formula, in Stalinist historifying, for

**The Soviets Expected It.* By Anna Louise Strong. Dial Press. $2.50.
The Kremlin and the People. By Walter Duranty. Reynal & Hitchcock. $2.00.

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blotting out the memory of Lenin and Trotsky, the real creators of the Red Army, and of Tukachevsky, who modernized and motorized it. But since she mentions Frunze's death, why doesn't Mrs. Strong also mention the peculiar circumstances in which it took place. As for Voroshilov, why has Stalin relieved him of his command? Mrs. Strong, who knows everything, misses many such opportunities to demonstrate her knowledge.

Neither she nor Mr. Duranty nor Mr. Davies are any more enlightening on the Moscow Trials. In all three books one finds very little new either as information or argument. And the few new departures ventured by these authors cannot withstand the slightest scrutiny.

Mr. Davies, for example, is particularly anxious to exculpate Stalin personally: "Moreover, generally speaking, in diplomatic circles here responsibility for these executions, in a strictly personal sense, is not attributed to Stalin." (Which is important evidence about . . . diplomatic circles.) But Mr. Duranty writes:

> In Moscow after the trial I was told that Ordjonikidze, the late Commissar of Heavy Industry, one of Stalin's oldest and nearest friends, went to Stalin to beg Piatakov's life. "I need him," he said, "the country needs him. I know that he is guilty of treason, but nevertheless he's the brains in our heavy industry. Surely, what he has done for us can be balanced against what he has done against us." "No," said Stalin. "But I need him," Ordjonikidze insisted, "and what's more, I will answer for him personally." "No," said Stalin. "He must die."

Whether this story is true or not, everybody except Mr. Davies and his "diplomatic circles" knows that Stalin decides everything. Mr. Davies present-day ignorance is all the more inexpliiable in view of the fact that Mr. Duranty, to whom he pays his respects several times in his book, was one of his chief sources of information while he was in Russia.

Mr. Davies' book has at least this to be said for it: in his innocence, the author sheds some light on one aspect of the Trials. We are told that at the time of the Radek Trial, Mr. Davies personally saved the life of a certain Vladimir Romm, former Tass correspondent in Washington, who, like all the rest, had confessed to all sorts of imaginary crimes. This intervention he made at the request of Mr. Arthur Krock of the *N. Y. Times*, acting in the name of "all members of the Washington newspaper corps" to guarantee the perfect Soviet loyalty of Romm. Despite the overwhelming guilt indicated by Romm's confession, the intervention was successful.

Naive, ignorant and . . . diplomatic as Mr. Davies is, he cannot even pretend to believe that Molotov made the decision. It was Stalin, and Stalin alone, who could make it. That is to say, Stalin refused Ordjonikidze's plea for Piatakov (and, in fact, had Ordjonidze himself "liquidated," something Messers Davies and Duranty forget to mention). But he spared Romm at Mr. Davies' request, so as not to provoke the members of the Washington newspaper corps, whom at the time he had his own reasons for cultivating. Where is the justice in all this?

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For if Romm was guilty, why did Mr. Davies save this "Fifth Columnist"? If leniency was proper in his case, why not in others? Because Romm had powerful connections in the United States? In that case, Mr. Davies' whole thesis as to the quality of Soviet "justice" collapses. And there are others cases like Romm's: Rakovsky was not condemned to death because a French politician intervened in his favor. And if Radek and Sokolnikov also benefitted by a similar bit of sleight-of-hand, inexplicable and unjustifiable from the point of view of the executioners for whom Mr. Davies is the apologist, it is also for reasons quite foreign to justice. For, according to the official reports and their own confessions, which Mr. Davies accepts at face value, they were all just as guilty as those condemned to death, if not more so.

Mr. Duranty, who strikes his own peculiar note in the fellow-travellers' concert, will no doubt make some such reply as: Don't worry, Stalin was smart enough to have those defendants executed secretly whom it was impolitic to condemn publicly. We agree entirely. But in that case, what becomes of Mr. Davies' thesis? Over 300 alleged accomplices were named in the course of the Trials who have not yet been publicly tried.

One more essential point must be made apropos Romm: all his American colleagues refused to believe in the crimes to which he confessed. The same scepticism, even better grounded, was expressed in other instances: Leon Blum, the celebrated Fifth Columnist, the Social Democrats and the Russian Social Revolutionaries now refugees in New York—all who could speak from their own personal knowledge have agreed on the fraudulence of the charges. They have also agreed that the confessions are curiously identical, so uniform indeed as to betray the trade-mark of the same factory: the GPU. Has such agreement ever before been seen, in fact, between several dozen defendants and witnesses? On Broadway or in Hollywood, it takes many rehearsals to obtain such a smooth performance. How could it have been done without a scenario learned by heart? If Mr. Davies had taken the trouble to look into previous Soviet trials, he would have found that the same scenario had already done duty, with Poincaré in the role of Hitler and the British Intelligence in the part of the Gestapo. And he might then have hesitated to endorse so unreservedly Stalin's legal methods.

There is hardly a sentence in Mr. Davies comments on the Trials which cannot be shown, with equal ease, to be false and improbable. It would take another book to set the record straight. If Mr. Davies really has at heart the interests of his country and of "democracy" in the world, he will realize it is his duty to rise above any considerations of personal vanity and see to it that Simon & Schuster publish such a book as a companion volume to his own. The preservation of democracy, or of such little of it as remains to us, is inseparable from simple truth, and the United States cannot collaborate safely with the Soviet Union without a realistic understanding of its partner.

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For, far from having "smashed the Fifth Column," Stalin has rather wiped out the most intelligent section of the population, the most resolutely hostile to Hitler and determined to fight him, the most deeply opposed to any pact with Hitler—that pact undertaken on the initiative of Stalin and broken not by Stalin but by Hitler. The massacre of the cream of the Russian Communist Party by Stalin was the first victory by Hitler over the U.S.S.R.

LEON COLBERT

ONE OUT OF FIVE

5 Young American Poets, Second Series 1941: Paul Goodman, Clark Mills, Jeanne McGahey, David Schubert, Karl Shapiro. New Directions. $2.50.

In war they tie a metal tag around the soldier's neck to identify the individual and his blood, and in games such as football there is a large number on the back of each player. But in the great mêlée which is modern poetry, the onlooker is not so fortunate as to be handed a tag with each poet. The poetry lover is asked to differentiate between the talents melting into each other in the blur of activity, usually under the cover of "influence" which hides a multitude of petty thieveries. The result is that it becomes extremely difficult for the reader to figure out what poet is capturing a pill-box or making a touchdown.

Paul Goodman has thrown away his "influence," from the modern poetry direction, anyway. He comes a stranger and a soldier of peace into the armed camp, fresh from the bland and neutral province of prose, all rosy and breathing humanism. It is unfortunate that he has seen fit to divide his excursion among the Five Young Poets by including a verse play which takes up half his allotted space. *Cain and Abel,* a play for dancers, is very interesting, almost exciting, but not worth its weight in poems. Perhaps the proof is in the dancing, for which we must wait. I find in the few poems under consideration that Mr. Goodman is a cogitator, a philosopher, a thinker, thoroughly concerned, but not a poet. He knows what he should write, why, how and when, all the classic angles, but he hasn't written it. I quote in full a short piece showing him at his poetic best:

Relying on disasters o' the war
to minimize my misery; and counting
those penalties that none can doubt as such
as the proof and the price of private vices I
otherwise do not believe in—

No!
I'll rather say it was our public crimes
that caused the world-wide calamity,
and that my private lapses get their wages

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(small sins small death) i' the very defect
of feeling that needs such a grandiose
analogy to burn me!

Yet my pleasures
are moderated almost to the death
by the embarrassing imagination of
the agony of Europe. How is this?

This teeters on the border of good poetry, but refuses to fall on either side. Faults: self-conscious self-blame, *pleasures* had to be italicized (there are no italics in poetry), the perplexed thinker asks the question the poet cannot answer, the insight is acute but not memorable.

Clark Mills on the other hand, showing the full effects of today's mêlée, is beating many poetic and romantic drums, waving unauthorized trophies from Yeats, Rilke, Auden, Spender, MacNeice, Rimbaud, etc. including a sprinkling of preposterous fainting spells by Harold Vinal. The synthesis is highly polished (they look, read and smell like poems) but fall apart under a penetrating look. In the main this is harmlessly bogus poetry (as against the viciously bogus poetry of, we'll say, Harry Brown), literary, pompous, watery, meaningless, honest kitsch. I quote a short passage from "Aerial":

Her feet glance not on boards but air, when beautiful
as a torch hurled, she soars beneath her canvas heaven,
when weightless as a meteor whose lives are seven
she wears the speed and motion of the lark and gull.

She floats, and with her hair unloosed and lips apart,
high in the white light, brilliant in the blue and gold,
turns like a slow phrase uttered, or a jewel rolled
on velvet, or a knife that seeks and finds the heart.

This sample shows all the faults and virtues of Clark Mills' poetry. Nice, is the word.

The next two poets don't interest me at all. Miss McGahey seems colorless, and as for Mr. Schubert, he writes: "A poet who observes his own poetry ends up . . . by finding nothing to observe." If Mr. Schubert is referring to his own poems, I am inclined to agree with him—a small talent wisely buried in dull verse.

Karl Shapiro who is last in the book seems by far the best of the five. That he is able to evaluate society in fresh poetic terms is no mean achievement today. He has an eye for social and psychic detail, as Louis MacNeice has an eye for description of things. ("obscene civics of our self-distrust," "Falls open like a dishonest look, /And shows us, rotted and endowed, /Its senile pleasure," "He is only a good alien, nominally happy.")

The majority of Mr. Shapiro's poems are longish lyrics, all built on

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the same pattern, with a tendency toward monotony, but in the aggregate a unity of tone. Oddly enough, the "just cause" that he is espousing and which is brought forward validly enough in warm imagery is responsible for his failures. "Conscription Camp" is more tirade than poem. A poem carries no banners (poets may), is reformless, itself an art and an end—if political reform is to follow the poem, the poem hasn't finished its work. But Karl Shapiro is distinctly worth reading, as poet.

OSCAR WILLIAMS

THE BRITISH GENIUS

The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and English Genius. By George Orwell. Secker & Warburg (London). 2 shillings.

In its virtues and in its defects, *The Lion and the Unicorn* is typical of English leftwing political writing. Its approach to politics is impressionistic rather than analytic, literary rather than technical, that of the amateur, not the professional. This has its advantages. Orwell's consciousness embraces a good deal that our own Marxists have wrongly excluded from their data (though Marx himself most decidedly didn't): such as that British army officers wear civilian clothes off duty, that the British are a nation of flower-lovers and stamp-collectors, the contrast between the goose-step of the German Army and the "formalized walk" of the British. There is also a *human* quality to Orwell's poltical writing; you feel it engages him as a moral and cultural whole, not merely as a specialist. For this reason it has a life, an ease and color which our own Marxist epigones seem to feel is somehow sinful; and its values are rarely *inhuman*, however muddled they seem at times.

But there are also the defects of the amateur: if Orwell's scope is broad, it is none too deep; he describes where he should analyze, and poses questions so impressionistically that his answers get nowhere; he uses terms in a shockingly vague way; he makes sweeping generalizations with the confidence of ignorance; his innocence of scientific criteria is appalling. What can one make of a statement like: "No real revolutionist has ever been an internationalist."? On page 62 he writes: "It has become clear in the last few years that 'common ownership of the means of production' is not in itself a sufficient definition of socialism. One must also add the following: approximate equality of incomes . . . political democracy, and abolition of all hereditary privilege, especially in education." Six pages later he speaks of "Russia, the only definitely socialist country." Obviously not a single one of Orwell's three necessary additions exist in Russia. Since Orwell's anti-Stalinism is well-known, one can only conclude that he is using the term "socialist" in very different senses in the two passages.

With most of Orwell's generalizations about the present war, I find myself in agreement. "What this war has demonstrated is that private capitalism *does not work*." "Either we turn this war into a revolutionary

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war or we lose it, and much more besides. . . . It is quite certain that with our present social structure we cannot win. Our real forces, physical, moral or intellectual cannot be mobilized." "We cannot establish anything that a Western nation would regard as socialism without defeating Hitler; on the other hand, we cannot defeat Hitler while we remain economically and socially in the nineteenth century." Recent events in Libya, Malaya, and the English Channel amply document such propositions. Most of Orwell's program, also, seems in general sensible as a first step: nationalization of land, mines, railways, banks and major industries; democratization of education; equalization of personal incomes; freedom for India.

But most of us on the left, from liberals to Trotskyists, would agree on some such program. The real question is Lenin's What Is To Be Done? Specifically, what classes or social groups can be mobilized to win such a program; what should be their attitude towards the existing political regimes and economic systems in England and America? Although Orwell seems to be politically closest to the left Labor Party group of Cripps and Laski, he hardly mentions the workingclass in his book and pins his hopes instead on a new middleclass of technicians, doctors, state employees, etc. which has made "the old classification of society into capitalists, proletarians and petit-bourgeois almost obsolete." This tendency exists and has often been noted. Nor is there any novelty in the conception of this new "classless middleclass" as the heir of the future. But Orwell is as deplorably vague about just *how* this new class will take over (and what specific indications already exist that it will) as all the other prophets of such a future have been. He seems to conceive of it as a gradual, osmotic process proceeding steadily within the old social framework. This classless revolution marches under the banner of nationalism, furthermore. Hence it is clear that Orwell, though, oddly enough, he never explicitly says so in the book, favors critical support of the existing Churchill war government.

As one who thinks that only a socialist government can defeat totalitarianism either within or without, and that the only road to such a state is for the workers to insist on replacing the antiquated capitalism represented by Roosevelt and Churchill with their own government, as such a one I can see in the history of the last three years no evidence for Orwell's easy confidence in this gradualist "revolution." He recognizes that before his program can be put into effect, "there will have to be a complete shift of power away from the old ruling class." But is any one today, including Orwell, able to see any indication of such a shift in England in the last two years? "Within a year, perhaps even six months," writes Orwell, "if we are still unconquered, we shall see the rise of something that has never existed before, a specifically *English* socialist movement." This was written at the end of 1940. Over a year has passed, and there are no signs of the English socialist movement Orwell so confidently predicted. Despite

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an almost unbroken string of humiliating defeats, in Africa, Malaya and now the English Channel itself, the reins of power are still firmly in the hands of Churchill, the former admirer of Hitler and Mussolini, the chief organizer of armed intervention against the infant Russian revolution, the leader of the British ruling class in smashing the 1926 general strike. (Orwell has plenty to say about poor old Chamberlain, but is silent on Churchill.) This great democrat has been able since Dunkirk, furthermore, to turn the government back to the old Tory gang and to emasculate —true enough with their enthusiastic cooperation—the Labor Party leadership. There has been a gradualist revolution, all right, but in reverse.

Perhaps the clue to this odd combination of acuteness as an observer and infantilism as a theorist may be found in Orwell's general intellectual orientation. He reacts so violently against the admittedly great defects of the leftwing intellectual tradition of the last two decades as to deny himself as an intellectual. Like Messers Brooks, Mumford, MacLeish and Chamberlain over here, Orwell is bitterly hostile to both internationalism and intellectualism, preaching the virtues of patriotism and denouncing "Europeanized intellectuals." He echoes the Brooks-MacLeish Thesis when he criticizes the intellectuals for being "negative," "carping" and "irresponsible," and when he writes, "If the English people suffered for several years a real weakening of morale, so that Fascist nations judged they were 'decadent' and that it was safe to plunge into war, the intellectual sabotage from the Left was partly responsible." Now it is true that the postwar Marxist tradition was over-schematic and timidly 'orthodox,' that it underestimated psychological and cultural factors and tried to apply a mechanical-materialistic yardstick to everything, and that it was purist to the point of sterility. But a reaction to the opposite pole is not the solution, either. A retreat to the kind of common-sense Philistinism which Orwell embraces in matters of theory seems to me even less calculated to preserve the values we both want to preserve than the sectarian Marxism it rejects. There are, of course, as I tried to show in my article on Van Wyck Brooks, deep historical reasons for the rise of this attitude today. There is a dangerous tendency, shown in several of the comments on the issue printed in the last number, to assume that it is mostly a matter of the personal stupidity of Brooks and Co. I would be the last to deny Mr. Brooks' mental incompetence, but the roots of the matter unfortunately go much deeper, as we can see when a man of the intelligence and goodwill of Orwell joins the parade.

I'd like to add a few words, finally, on the format of Orwell's book. Why are British books so much more physically attractive than our own? And why do short, cheap books—really long pamphlets—apparently "go" so much better in England than here? First published in February 1941, this is the first of the "Searchlight Books," a series of inexpensive little pocket books on war issues. It is printed on the pleasantly lightweight book paper the English use, has a light binding of unbleached cloth, fits

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easily into a suit pocket, and altogether is a sensible and unpretentiously attractive little volume. If it were published over here, it would weigh twice as much, would be just too big to fit into the pocket, and would therefore be three times as expensive and half as good-looking. But it probably wouldn't be published here anyway because American publishers seem to think the public won't buy short, cheap original editions. Whatever the former merits of the argument, the war may well have changed things. The 150-200 page book is the ideal medium for political pamphleteering, more topical and pointed than a full-length book and yet offering enough space to go deeper than a magazine article. The time would seem overripe for a "Searchlight Series" of our own.

DWIGHT MACDONALD

Design for Power. By Frederick L. Schuman. Maps by George D. Brodsky. Knopf. $3.50.

This book provides additional confirmation of Frank Trager's analysis and exposure of Schuman in his article, "F. L. Schuman: A Case History," in PARTISAN REVIEW for March-April, 1940. The maps by George Brodsky are useful but not worth the price of the volume. SIDNEY HOOK

The Language of Poetry. By Philip Wheelwright, Cleanth Brooks, I. A. Richards, Wallace Stevens. Edited, with a preface, by Allen Tate. Princeton University Press. $2.

This collection of four lectures by a professional philosopher, a literary critic, a psychologist, and a poet—each of the highest distinction in his field—is more important for what it undertakes and promises than for what it manages to accomplish. One may or may not agree with the editor that there is going on "in America today an exhaustive study of poetic language such as criticism has not attempted either here or in Europe in any previous age." There was, after all, Coleridge, not to mention Hopkins in his notebooks and letters, and none of our critics are quite up to these two at their best. But certainly there are more serious and hard-thinking people at work than ever before; the general level is higher; and the only thing in the way of a first-rate body of criticism is an insufficient coordination of effort—a parochialism of approach. (Unfortunately, critics as a breed are among the least cooperative and fraternal of mortals, filching from each other with the most brazen insouciance.)

Philip Wheelwright points out at the beginning that discussion of poetic language apart from the whole "cultural consciousness" out of which language, when it is used poetically, must emerge is pretty futile. And since this consciousness expresses itself most comprehensively in ritual and myth it is to these forms that we must return. Such a view is so like this reviewer's remarks on "Myth as Method" in the PARTISAN REVIEW a few years ago that to endorse it is sheer narcissism. But Mr. Wheelwright, alas, brings to the direct discussion of myth more enthusiasm

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than insight, more logic as to its claims on our attention than illumination of its nature. What can he mean, for example, by the "myth of love"? Properly analyzed, are not all myths concerned with love—the formalization of man's relations to his various objects of love? Or does he refer only to "romantic" love? And to use a phrase like "the myth of tragedy" is enough to addle the brain if one knows, as no one knows better than Mr. Wheelwright, that tragedy is based on myth—indeed, *is* myth. Despite this confusion as to the actual thing that he defends so brilliantly against the semanticists and logical positivists, his paper is the most ambitious and far-reaching of the four; it lays the ground-work for the rest.

Cleanth Brooks develops the notion that the language of poetry is a language of paradox. This makes possible some high-powered but not always convincing exegetical operations on Wordsworth and Donne. But to such a thesis one must object on two counts: (1) Words like "paradox" and "analogy" refer to logical propositions and therefore belong to the realm of intellectual discourse and not to that of the imagination; they throw the road wide open to the Philistines. (2) Not all poets, despite Mr. Brooks' understandable admiration for Donne, do actually rely very much on paradox. (Isn't it time for someone to say a decent word for Blake and Keats—or even Shakespeare?) I. A. Richards adds little to his previous discussions of "the interaction of words"; his is a set piece, and a very fine set piece. It is interesting also in that it reveals how much more respect he is now paying to the insights of classic philosophy. But Donne, once again Donne, is the prime exemplar. And what is there to say of Wallace Stevens' Report on the State of the Universe except that it demonstrates conclusively that poetry has all along been his proper medium. For Mr. Stevens states much more neatly and bitterly in his verse the conflict that has racked him all these years—a conflict between the imagination and something that he calls "reality." What precisely he means by reality is never certain; perhaps he should be recommended to read Mr. Wheelwright, who is excellent on the subject. Surely Mr. Stevens is among our half-dozen best poets. But he is also the only poet in history perhaps who has made of the distrust of the imagination the theme and subject of poetry. Indeed, there trembles through all four of these essays the sense that it is somehow necessary to make an honest woman out of poetry.

WILLIAM TROY

Canibales Politicos. By Julian Gorkin. Quetzal, Mexico City. Pesos: 3.50

A Donde Va Francia? By Marceau Pivert. Publicaciones Panamericanas, Mexico City. Pesos: 3.00

Hitler Contra Stalin. By Victor Serge. Quetzal, Mexico City. Pesos: 2.50

From Mexico, where they now live as political refugees, three leading left-wing fighters weigh the causes and consequences of three major epi-

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sodes of this World Civil War No. 1: the Spanish prologue (this prologue being an epilogue, too), the French defeat, and the Nazi-Russian war.

A prominent member of the POUM, Gorkin had a narrow escape from the GPU jails. In the most vivid part of his book, he relates his Odysseian experiences: heart-grinding anecdotes are mixed with oversimplified psychological portraits, and with politico-philosophical commentaries which, although often verging on a wordy conception of "dialectics," do not impair the value of the facts. No historian of the Spanish civil war can neglect such a rich (although passionate) source of information. The introduction provides a sound analysis of the mistakes and acts of treason which led the legal government to a fateful end. Everyone in Spain (except the anarchists, Poumists and Trotzkists), every nation in Europe, including the papal State, has a share of responsibility. This is not news, but it is true.

In so far as he refused to help the Spanish Republic (and so far only) Léon Blum is to be reckoned among the architects of the French defeat. Marceau Pivert agrees with Gorkin. He was one of those "reds," or "Cassandras," or "warmongers," who understood that the so-called "non-intervention" meant France's hara-kiri, and a dirty deed, too. From Daladier's and Blum's electoral machines to the Stalinist groups and the fascist "leagues," everyone in France (except the members of the PSOP, Marceau Pivert's own party) is differently but definitely to be blamed. Slightly biased, but honestly, *A donde va Francia,* will help the American reader to understand the "collapse" of France.

If almost every leader of opinion was wrong in the democracies, Stalin, for his part, led Russia through a series of purges and blunders to its present plight: having doomed 30,000 out of 80,000 officers, 3 out of 5 Field-Marshals, having ruthlessly crushed honest as well as treacherous opposition, how could Stalin expect from his army precisely what he himself thought to be the very weapon of victory: the strategic offensive, the fight on foreign soil? Having double-crossed the Spanish leftists, the Yugoslavian government, the French Republic, every nation but Nazi Germany, how could he be unwise enough to wait until Hitler was ready to strike? These are Stalin's secrets. But the past is past.

As for the present, Serge is able to appreciate the good and evil of the Russian system: the Soviet resistance, he says, "demonstrates the superiority of a revolutionary society, even the one which is dominated by an internal counter-revolution, as compared to a traditional democracy where the reactionary forces are free to sabotage." The same was true in 1793. The same will always be true, in cases of emergency.

It seems to me that we are quite aware, now, of the main errors which have been perpetrated. However, we do not yet know how to avoid more mistakes, once Hitler is defeated. "Let us make a balance sheet and prepare for the future"—such were, according to Gorkin, the first words uttered in Paris by the Executive Committee of his group, after Franco's victory. A good idea. But is it enough to offer, as a remedy to our unrest,

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the concept of "Marxist dialectics"? Is it an adequate panacea to repeat that the "only function of fascism is to aggravate the agony of capitalism"? If we are to profit at all from this World Civil War No. 1, our first task, an imperative one, is to get rid of all ready-made notions, all remnants of contemporary scholastic theology. "From the excesses of slavery," writes Marceau Pivert, "a new freedom will surge." This is scholastic theology. For, if Hitler wins, how many decades, how many centuries of serfdom must we foresee? We are not interested in a liberty that will blossom in 2548, or even in 2200. "It's true that this world is pretty bad," says the average Catholic; "but wait a minute, ten thousand years, for example; then Christianity will have permeated all human souls, justice and happiness will have come." I prefer Victor Serge's political realism, which is neither *Realpolitik*, nor cynicism. When he sketches the near future, he feels as if mind were "closed up in an infernal circle." Such is our future, though. In order to shape it, we must face it however ugly it may be. Many surprises are waiting for us: unless we dissociate politics from metaphysics, we are committed to dissociate politics from ethics; unless we think a little more about "liberty" and "authority," we are likely not to understand how it is possible to foresee "the birth of new republics, harsh to their enemies, both libertarian and authoritarian." And still, Serge's forecast might be our truth; his antinomies, our values.

ETIEMBLE

"Dangerous Thoughts"

Editors' Note: War and freedom of thought have never been easy bedfellows. This war is no exception. In our last issue we wrote: "Our main task now is to preserve cultural values against all types of pressure and coercion. Obviously we cannot even speak of the survival of democratic civilization apart from the survival of our entire cultural tradition. This includes the fullest freedom of expression on political matters." It seems to us that it may be useful, in the struggle to preserve cultural values, to establish this new regular department, a "listening post" to give publicity to the more significant instances of suppression of free thought from month to month. Our readers are invited and urged to send in material for this column.

The entry of the United States into the war caused a number of significant casualties on the journalistic front. The non-interventionist news-letter, *Uncensored*, ceased publication because, according to a note from its editor, Sidney Hertzberg, "It is no longer possible to get contributions to make up our deficits." The Institute for Propaganda Analysis shut down "for the duration," and part of its staff, headed by Harold Lasswell, moved down to Washington to begin manufacturing, instead of debunking, propaganda. Oscar Ameringer's radical-populist weekly *The American Guardian*, widely read for twenty-five years in the south and middle west, had to suspend publication when its readers protested violently against the editors' attempt to change its line from anti- to pro-war after Pearl Harbor.

●

Error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it.—Thomas Jefferson: First Inaugural Address.

●

It is important to note that all the instances noted this month, are cases of *voluntary* suppression. So far, official censorship, in the field of freedom of thought and expression, has played little part. Many editors, publishers and journalists seem to share the attitude expressed by the veteran liberal, William

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Allen White, who recently explained why his *Emporia Gazette* had dropped the syndicated "Washington Merry-Go-Round" column: "We felt the authors, Mr. Pearson and Mr. Allen, were too anxious to print . . . matters which would offend the censor and possibly give aid and comfort to our enemies. . . . These young men are good reporters. They are honest and conscientious but just a shade too enterprising for these troublous times."

●

"Miss Rothe's discussion of Russian music under the Revolution was written, and accepted for publication in these pages, before Russia entered the present war."—Editors' Note at the end of an article on Russian music in the Winter, 1942, issue of *Kenyon Review.*

●

Freedom only for the supporters of the government, only for the members of one party—however numerous they be—is no freedom at all. Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently. . . . Only unobstructed, effervescing life falls into a thousand new forms and improvisations, brings to light creative force, itself corrects all mistaken attempts. . . . Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of the press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinion, life dies out in every public institution, becomes a mere semblance of life, in which only the bureaucracy remains as the active element. — Rosa Luxemburg: The Russian Revolution.

●

Editors, *The Nation*
Sirs:

We think your readers will be interested in our recent experience with the Post Office News Co., a large book and magazine store at 37 West Monroe St., Chicago.

From the time PARTISAN REVIEW first appeared under its present editorship four years ago, P. O. News has been our biggest Chicago outlet. Last summer they increased their order by one-third. On December 15 last, they wrote us as follows (complete text):

"This letter will serve to cancel our standing order for PARTISAN REVIEW. Returns will follow."

We replied, asking why this sudden cancellation. Receiving no answer, we wrote to the Union News Co., of New York City, which is P. O. News's parent corporation. Union News, has to date, been equally uncommunicative.

A friend in Chicago advises us that after Pearl Harbor, P. O. News purged its shelves of all left-wing publications. He adds, incidentally, that even *The Nation* and *The New Republic* were at first banned.

Government censorship can be bad enough, but unofficial censorship is to the official variety as lynching is to legal execution. We see no good reason for P. O. News Co. to assume the functions of the Department of Justice.

Thank you for giving this affair a little healthy publicity.

Sincerely,

THE EDITORS OF PARTISAN REVIEW

Feb. 17, 1942.

●

Three books, either critical or definitely hostile to the present regime in Russia, have been withdrawn from publication after having been publicly announced. Doubleday, Doran has cancelled the publication this spring of *One Who Survived,* the reminiscences of a former Soviet diplomat, Alexander Barmine. Harper has withdrawn *My Year in the U.S.S.R.,* by the former *N. Y. Times* Moscow correspondent, G. E. R. Gedye, and also Trotsky's *Life of Stalin.* The latter book was actually sent out for review, only to be recalled a few days later (on December 12) by a note signed by President Cass Canfield which concludes, "We hope you will cooperate with us in the matter of avoiding any comment whatever regarding the biography and its postponement."

●

There be who perpetually complain of schisms and sects, and make it such a calamity that any man dissents from their maxims. . . . They are the troublers, they are the dividers of unity, who neglect and permit not others to unite those dissevered pieces, which are yet wanting to the body of truth. To be still searching what we know not by what we know, still closing up truth to truth as we find it (for all her body is homogeneal and proportional), this is the golden rule in theology as well as in arithmetic, and makes up the best harmony in a church; not the forced and outward union of cold and neutral and inwardly divided minds.—John Milton: Areopagitica.

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Letter to the President of Mexico

Editor's Note: The letter printed below is, we think, self-explanatory. It was signed by more than 200 prominent liberals, trade union leaders, writers, educators, clergymen and political leaders, including the editors of PARTISAN REVIEW. *We regret that considerations of space prevent us from printing the full list of signers. . . . We might add that the New York daily press, with the exception of the* N. Y. Times, *failed to print a single line on the story, despite the eminence of the signers and despite energetic publicity efforts. Fortunately, however, the letter seems to have produced a considerable effect in Mexico City, where the local Stalinist apparatus has been forced for the moment to slacken its persecution of the refugees in question. But although the weapon of slander has broken in the hands of the Mexican Communists, the danger of a GPU-inspired attack on the lives of one or more of these refugees still remains. Continued support from this country will be their best protection.*

New York, February 9, 1942

Excmo. Sr. Don Manuel Avila Camacho
Presidente de la Republica de Mexico
Mexico, D. F.
Your Excellency:

We trust you will not think us presumptuous if we call your attention to a campaign of slander that has been initiated against certain refugees in your country. These refugees, of widely varied political faiths, are united only in being opponents of the Communist International and of Fascism. Outstanding among them are: Marceau Pivert, Victor Serge, Julian Gorkin, Gustave Regler, and Grandiso Muniz.

Against these individuals a slander campaign has been initiated by Mundo Obrero, mouthpiece of the Mexican Communist Party. This campaign has since spread with increasing violence to other sections of the press. The Communists have been able to prevent these refugees from getting any aid or publicity for their reply to the fantastic charges made against them.

It is alleged that the persons in question are "agents of Hitler," "shock troops of the Nazi Fifth Column," "gangsters," "spies," and "saboteurs." On the basis of these charges a group of deputies sympathetic to the Communist International has introduced into the Chamber of Deputies a resolution demanding that these refugees be either expelled from Mexico or put into a concentration camp.

These charges—suddenly whipped up months after these refugees were granted asylum in your country—are without any foundation in fact. It is a matter of public record that all of these men have for years been active anti-fascists. Specifically:

Marceau Pivert, now actually charged with having "collaborated with the French fascist group, Croix de Feu," was once the secretary to Leon Blum and was the former secretary of the P.S.O.P., a Socialist organization of workers and intellectuals now working against Hitler in France.

Victor Serge, now called "an agent of Otto Abetz," is a left-wing

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novelist and journalist who escaped from Russia in 1935 with the aid of Andre Gide, Ignazio Silone and other writers.

Julian Gorkin was a leader of the Spanish workingclass party, the P.O.U.M.

Gustave Regler was also prominent, as a high commander in the military forces, in the heroic struggle of the Spanish Republic.

Grandiso Muniz was a Spanish revolutionary Socialist who worked with the P.O.U.M. in the Spanish Civil War and narrowly escaped execution by Franco.

Such are the records of these refugees, now accused by the Mexican Communist Party of being Hitler's agents. As American anti-fascists, we have greatly admired the Mexican government for its generous hospitality to Europe's anti-fascist refugees. We have every confidence that your government will not allow itself to be influenced by this disgusting campaign of vilification.

We must also point out the need for utmost vigilance by the Mexican authorities against possible murder attempts. Already the Communist press is calling for the formation of "Vigilante Committees" to deal with these alleged "Nazi Fifth Columnists." We need hardly remind your excellency that it was a "Vigilante Committee," led by David Siquieros, a leading member of the Mexican Communist Party, that perpetrated the machine-gun raid on Trotsky's house and later murdered one of his bodyguards.

We are confident the Mexican Government will know how to deal with this reign of terror against refugees whose only "crime" is that they are opponents of the Communist International.

In closing, allow us to congratulate your country, through yourself, on its enlightened, humane, and generous policy of hospitality to the lovers of freedom from all lands where freedom has temporarily vanished.

ED. NOTE: *Among the more than 200 signers of the letter were:*

Louis Adamic
George Baldanzi (executive vice-president, Textile Workers Union)
Roger Baldwin
Ralph Bates
Alfred M. Bingham
William E. Bohn (editor, The New Leader)
Anita Brenner
André Breton
Dorothy Dunbar Bromley
Van Wyck Brooks
James Burnham
Walter B. Cannon (professor of physiology, Harvard University)
John Chamberlain
George S. Counts (president, American Federation of Teachers)
Walter Damrosch
Maurice P. Davidson (director, N. Y. State Power Authority)
Ned H. Dearborn (dean of adult education, New York University)
John Dewey
John Dos Passos
David Dubinsky
Max Eastman
Irwin Edman
Ethel P. Epstein (labor secretary to Mayor LaGuardia)
James T. Farrell
Waldo Frank
Samuel H. Friedman (editor, The Call)
Carl J. Friedrichs (professor of government, Harvard University)
Miguel Garriga (vice-president, Hotel & Restaurant Employees Union)
Harry Gideonse (president, Brooklyn College)
Frank P. Graham (pres. U. of North Carolina; member, the President's War Labor Board)
John Green (president, Industrial Union of Marine and Shipbuilding Workers of America)
Adolph Held (president, Amalgamated Bank; chairman, Jewish Labor Committee)
Granville Hicks
Julius Hochman (general manager, Joint Board, Dress & Waistmakers Union of Greater New York)
Sidney Hook
Quincy Howe
Stanley M. Isaacs (member, N. Y. City Council)
Freda Kirchwey
Gertrude Weil Klein (member N. Y. City Council; general organizer, Amalgamated Clothing Workers)

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Hans Kohn
Layle Lane (columnist, Harlem Age; vice-president, American Federation of Teachers)
Algernon Lee (N. Y. City Chairman, Social Democratic Federation)
Max Lerner
James Loeb, Jr. (executive secretary, Union for Democratic Action)
Ludwig Lore (foreign news commentator, New York Post)
Ferdinand Lundberg
Eugene Lyons
Thomas Mann
Margaret Marshall
R. M. MacIver (professor of sociology, Columbia University)
Morris Milgram (executive secretary, Workers Defense League)
Rev. A. J. Muste
Louis Nelson (manager-secretary, Local 155, International Ladies Garment Workers Union)
Reinhold Niebuhr
Culbert L. Olson (Governor of California)
Walter Pach
David Pinski (president, Jewish National Workers Alliance)
Katherine Anne Porter
Rev. A. Clayton Powell, Jr. (Negro leader; member, New York City Council)
A. Philip Randolph (president, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters)
Edward G. Robinson
James Rorty
Alex Rose (N. Y. State secretary, American Labor Party)
Gaetano Salvemini
Meyer Schapiro
Harry Scherman (director, Book of the Month Club)
Joseph Schlossberg (member, Board of Higher Education of N. Y. City; secy.-treas. emeritus, Amalgamated Clothing Workers)
Rose Schneiderman (secretary, N. Y. State Department of Labor)
Vincent Sheean
W. Warren Smith (president, Tobacco Workers Union)
Norman Thomas
Dorothy Thompson
Carlo Tresca
Robert Watt (international representative, American Federation of Labor)
James Wechsler (labor editor, PM)
Edmund Wilson
Bertram D. Wolfe
Matthew Woll (vice-president, American Federation of Labor)

Note: The affiliation of the signers are given for purposes of identification only.

Letters

WANTED: MORE ARMY LETTERS

Sirs:

Your letters from soldiers are so interesting and so important I think I will have to tell you my obsession hoping you may be enough in agreement to give it some sort of a boost. It is that there should immediately be an organization for a Soldiers and Workers Peace. I have been met with the objection anything to do with soldiers can be construed as treason, but my idea is *not* to propagandize the soldiers, but to hear *from* them, to let them tell us what they want, and to listen mighty careful. If you can receive letters from soldiers, if they can know there is someone to listen to them, there might be some hope for a decent peace after the war. They have been told to die without being asked. Must they also be told how to live after the war instead of being asked, those that survive? The workers are more articulate, but they should also be assured of continued attention. Do you agree?

Sincerely,
MARGARET DE SILVER

BROOKLYN, N. Y.

We do agree and hereby invite our readers in the armed forces to write us their reactions and impressions, for publication here.—ED.

POET EXPLAINS

Sirs:

May I make a point of structural analysis about my poem *Winter 1939* that appeared in your last issue. The poem was written on and as of that date and the meaning of the last line, "now at last they have their war" was therefore the following: that certain Americans, previously described, now have the satisfaction of the war in Europe.

Obviously if this poem were written now, the last line would have to read: "now at last *they* have *our* war," or more sardonically, "now at last *we* have *their* war." But in such a case—and here is the point of structural analysis—the whole rest of the poem would likewise have to be altered, for the unresolved note of "their" and "our" cannot be the conclusion of the preceding description of torpor and dead-end. Given the line "now at last *they* have *our* war," the poetic atmosphere may well be wintry, but it cannot be an atmosphere of *ending*. It is the

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beginning of something, even if probably the beginning of much worse. . . .

In a deeper sense, alas—a sense too deep for excited little poems—it is, and was, necessary to say: "now at last we have our war."

PAUL GOODMAN

NEW YORK CITY

SUMMER SCHOLARSHIPS

The Trustees of the Cummington School announce a competitive scholarship for summer study in Writing, the conferences being under the leadership of some of the most eminent writers of our day. These scholarships give advanced training on the levels of professional, graduate and undergraduate study. Candidates must have completed secondary school and have done considerable work in their fields. Each scholarship provides living and instruction for ten weeks. These are open both to young men and women, but only to those who cannot finance their study without full aid.

All applications must be filed complete before March 21, 1942. Candidates should send for application blanks and instructions: they should not send examples of work until notified to do so. Address Registrar, Cummington School, Cummington, Massachusetts.

THE PREVENTION OF MALARIA

"The mosquito is a definite host to carry malaria from one patient to another, and man is an intermediate host. The prevention of malaria is thus concerned with the extinction of the mosquito."—*Bulletin from Britain.*

Watson, Gorgas, Ross, and Harvey
Fought the pupae and the larvae.
The godlike intellect of man
Has now evolved a simpler plan.

ROBERT DANIEL

NEW HAVEN, CONN.

WHO ARE THE 'IRRESPONSIBLES'?

Sirs:

On my desk this morning, along with the full Roberts and Truman reports, is the red-white-and-blue pamphlet, "Report to the Nation," issued by Archibald MacLeish. I have long had a theory that the key to his deflection is to be found in his poetry—particularly the abruptly terminated "Hamlet"—and I would like to see this handled, psychologically, by some able writer.

One can keep from too great bitterness about politicians, and the 'pickers and stealers' who have moved in on Washington to get their profits at the expense of our sons. But when poets and writers react as have MacLeish, Mumford, Brooks and others—that is cause for despair. They are the real 'Irresponsibles' and I hope you will continue not to let them forget it.

RUTH ROBERTSON

CHICAGO, ILL.

In his two articles on MacLeish in PARTISAN REVIEW *last year, Morton D. Zabel analyzed the connection between MacLeish's poetry and his politics. There are also, of course, Julien Benda's* The Treason of the Clerks *and Randolph Bourne's fine articles in* Seven Arts *on the conduct of intellectuals in the last war.*—ED.

WHITTIER ON BROOKS

Sirs:

This should answer Van Wyck (Back to Whittier) Brooks:

"Too cheaply truths once purchased dear
Are made our own.
Too long the world has smiled to hear
Our boast of full corn in the ear
By others sown."

(J. G. Whittier: *Anniversary Poem,* 1863)

KENNETH REXROTH

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.

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